

The Massachusetts Review



Poems by Robert Francis, Gray Burr, Leonard Nathan, Don Geiger, Phyllis Webb; *fiction* by Halldór Laxness, Miriam Goldman, Hugh Stretton; *articles* by A. Hyatt Mayor, Oscar Handlin, Newton Arvin, Henry Popkin, Edwin Honig, Chard Powers Smith; *reviews* by Allen Guttman, Anne Halley, Marc Ratner, Douglas Bush, Raymond D. Gozzi * The Etchings of Jacques Callot

AUTUMN 1961

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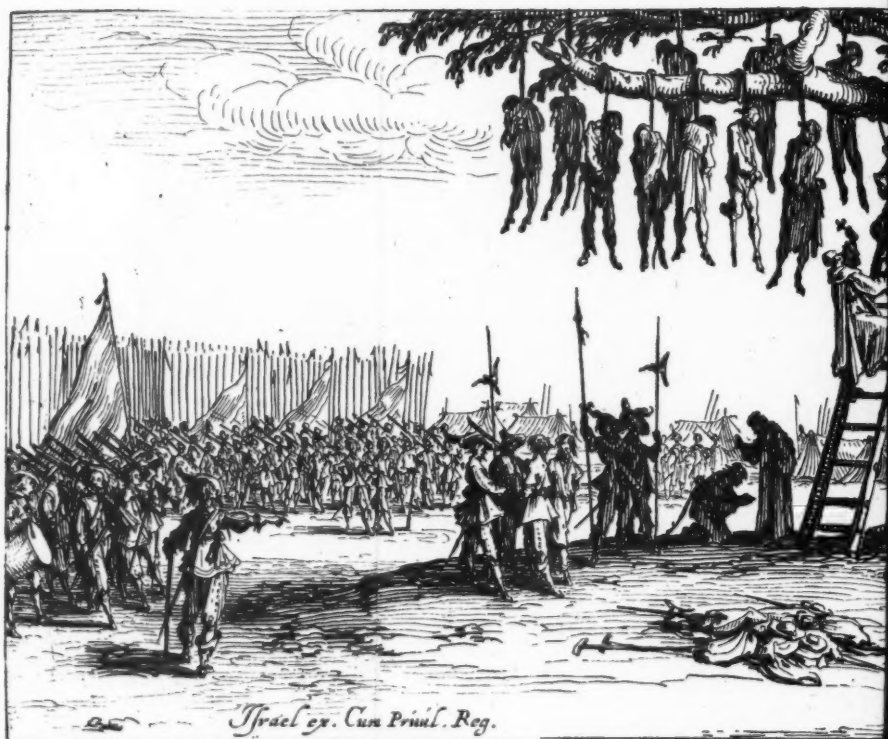


Jacques Callot From The Beggars 1622 Etching Enlarged

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Israel ex. Cum Priuileg. Reg.

*A la fin ces Voleurs infames et perdus ,
Comme fruits malheureux a cet arbre pendus*

*Monstrent bien que le crim
Est luy mesme instrument*

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Jacques Callot The Hangman's Tree From The



le crim
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*Monstrent bien que le crime (horrible et noire engeance)
 Et luy mesme instrument de honte et de vengeance ,*

*Et que cest le Destin des hommes vicieux
 Desprouver tost ou tard la iustice des Cieux . 1)*

MR

The Massachusetts Review *Autumn 1961*

A QUARTERLY OF LITERATURE THE ARTS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Notes on Contributors

COVER: *Pantaloön*, etching by
JACQUES CALLOT.

Luther Allen is back at the University of Massachusetts after teaching for a year in Saigon. *Newton Arvin* won a National Book Award in 1951 for his critical biography of Herman Melville. *Leonard Baskin* was named Best Engraver at the International Biennial Exhibition at São Paulo this past summer. *Gray Burr* has published widely, taught, and now lives and writes in Vermont. *Douglas Bush*, one of the nation's foremost scholars, is Professor of English at Harvard University. *Kenneth G. Chapman* teaches English at the University of California at Los Angeles. *Joanne Childers* lives with her husband and children in Gainesville, Florida. *Charles Farber* is a metallurgist in Springfield, Massachusetts.

Robert Francis recently published his latest volume, *The Orb Weaver*, in the Poetry Series of the Wesleyan University Press. *Don Geiger*, Associate Editor of the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, is the author of a volume of verse and one of literary criticism; he is represented in *Best Poems of 1958*. *Miriam Goldman*, a graduate of Radcliffe College, majored in music. *Raymond Gozzi*, of the University of Massachusetts, has written a psychological study of H. D. Thoreau.

Allen Guttman, whose book on America and the Spanish Civil War is to be published by The Free Press of Glencoe, teaches at Amherst College.

MR Literary Awards

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*The Jennie Tane
Award*
for the best poem of
the year: \$200. Fund for
the award by anonymous
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The winners
of the first annual awards will
be selected by a jury of distin-
guished writers, and announced
in the Autumn 1962 issue of
The Massachusetts Review.

John Haag has appeared in many magazines here and abroad. *Anne Halley*, who has published variously in *MR*, won a Longview Foundation award this year for a memoir in *First Person*. *Oscar Handlin*, Professor of History at Harvard University, is the author of *The Uprooted*, which received the Pulitzer Prize in 1952.

(continued on page 212)

Halldór Kiljan Laxness

The Fish Concert

A VERY WISE MAN once said that next to losing their mother there are few things more wholesome for young children than losing their father. Although I can far from agree with these words in all respects, I would still hardly take it upon myself to contradict them, at least not directly. For my own part, I can mention these words without any feeling of resentment toward the world, or perhaps rather, without feeling the smart which lies hidden in their sound.

But no matter how one may feel about this viewpoint, it so happened that it was my lot in life to find myself without parents here in this world. I would not exactly say that it was my good fortune; that would be to word it a bit too strongly. But I can hardly call it a misfortune either, at least not as far as I myself am concerned; and that is because I had grandfather and grandmother. It might be closer to the truth to say that the misfortune was on the part of my father and mother, though not because I might have become any model son to them, quite to the contrary; but rather because children are really more

©1957 by Halldór Kiljan Laxness. Published originally as *Brekkukots Annáll* (Reykjavik: Helgafell, 1957); the title *The Fish Concert* is taken from the German version of this work. The selections printed here are translations directly from the Icelandic—the first to be published in English—by permission of Curtiss Brown, Ltd., holder of the American rights. The translation is by Kenneth G. Chapman and Wayne O'Neil.

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necessary for parents than parents are for children; but that is another matter.

To make a long story short, it can be told that south of the graveyard in our future capital city, there where the slope begins to flatten out by the southern end of the pond, precisely on the spot where Guthmundur Guthmundsson the son of Jon Guthmundsson the owner of Guthmunsen's Store later finally built a fine house, just there stood at one time a small, two-gabled farmhouse made of turf; and the two ridgepoles pointed south toward the pond. This little farm was called Brekkukot. On this farm lived my grandfather, the late Bjorn of Brekkukot who sometimes fished for lumpfish in the spring, and with him that woman who has stood nearer to me than most women although I knew less about her, my grandmother. This little turf house was a free guesthouse for anyone who wished to stay there. At the time when I was about to come into being, the house was packed with that kind of people who nowadays are called refugees; who are fleeing the country; they leave their homes and birthplaces with tears in their eyes because life is so difficult there that their children can neither grow nor die.

And so it happened one day, or so I am told, that there came to the house a young woman from somewhere out west; or up north; or maybe it was even out east. This woman was on her way to America on account of her poverty and bereavement, in flight from those who ruled Iceland. I have been told that her passage had been paid for by Mormons and I have heard that in that sect are to be found the finest people of any in the New World. But back to this woman whom I have brought into the story: while she was staying there at Brekkukot waiting for a ship, she happened to give birth to a child. And this woman, when she had produced her child, looked at the little boy and said:

This boy shall be called Elf.

I think I would call him Grimur, replied my grandmother.

Then we'll call him Elfgrimur, said my mother.

And so the only thing which this woman has given me, besides my body and soul, is that name: Elfgrimur. As are all

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fatherless children in Iceland, I was called Hansson. Then the woman left me behind naked, with that strange name, in the lap of the late Bjorn in Brekkukot and disappeared. This woman is now out of our story.

I will now begin this book with our old clock as it is standing in the living-room in Brekkukot and is ticking away. There was a silver bell in this clock. It struck with a clear tone and could be heard not only all over the farm, but also up in the graveyard. But in the graveyard there was another bell—it was made of copper; and that bell sounded with a deep clang, all the way into our house. Thus, when the weather was right, these two bells could be heard sounding in harmony in the little turf house, the one of silver, the other of copper.

Our clock had a decorated face and in the middle of the decoration could be read that this clock had been constructed by Mr. James Cowan who lived in Edinburgh in the year 1750. The clock was undoubtedly constructed to stand in another house than Brekkukot, because it had been necessary to remove the peak so that it would fit under the ceiling. This clock ticked slowly and venerably and I early had a suspicion that it alone of all clocks could be trusted. Pocket watches seemed to me to be dumb children in comparison with this clock. The seconds in other men's clocks were like hopping toads in a race with themselves, but the seconds in the clock in my grandfather's and grandmother's house were like cows and always moved as slowly as it is possible to move without standing still.

It was said that if there was anything doing in the room, the clock could no more be heard than if it did not exist; but when it became quiet again and the guests had left and the table was cleared and the door closed, then it started up again and never lost count; and if you listened carefully enough there came sometimes a singing tone in its sound; or as if it echoed faintly.

How was it that I got the idea that a strange creature lived in this clock and that the strange creature was eternity? It just sort of occurred to me one day that the word it said when it ticked, a four-syllable word with heavy accents on alternate syllables, was e-TERN-i-TY, e-TERN-i-TY. Did I know that

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word? It was funny that I should discover eternity in that way, long before I knew what eternity was, and even before I had learned that proposition that all men are mortal; yes, actually while I lived in eternity itself. It was as if a fish suddenly were to discover the water it swims in. I mentioned this to my grandfather one time when it so happened that we were alone in the room.

Do you understand the clock, grandfather, I asked.

We know this clock only slightly, he said. We know only that it shows the date and the time all the way down to the seconds. But your grandmother's great-uncle, who owned this clock for sixty-five years, told me that according to the former owner it had shown the phases of the moon before some clockmaker got at it. Old folks in your grandmother's family said that this clock could tell weddings and deaths. But I take that with a grain of salt, my boy.

Then I said: Why does the clock always say e-TERN-i-TY c-TERN-i-TY c-TERN-i-TY c-TERN-i-TY?

You must have heard wrong, little fellow, said my grandfather.

Isn't there any eternity then? I asked.

Not other than you have heard in your grandmother's evening prayers and in my readings on Sunday, my boy, he replied.

Well, tell me, grandfather, I said then. Is eternity a living creature?

Don't talk nonsense, my boy, said my grandfather.

Well, then tell me, grandfather, can any other clock than our clock be trusted?

No, replied my grandfather; our clock tells the right time. And that's because I long ago stopped letting clockmakers look at it. I have never met a clockmaker who understood this clock. If I can't fix it myself, then I let some tinkerer look at it; I have found tinkerers to be best.

[*THE FISH CONCERT* is the story of the growing up of this foundling boy Elfggrimur in the house of the old couple he calls grandfather and grandmother. The story is told through the eyes of the child

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and his development is outlined by relating incidents in his life and describing the many people who come to visit at Brekkukot, in contact with whom his life is fashioned. There is very little external plot, the book rather taking the form, for the most part, of a series of independent narratives. As disconnected as these appear, however, at first glance, they all form an organic whole, drawn together by their significance in the development of the boy.]

... NOW AS I SIT HERE in the garden and play by myself this summer day, and the flies are buzzing, and there is cackling in the henhouse, and my grandfather's net shed is half open, and the sun shines from a clear sky with as much brightness as it can shine in this earthly life, I see where a man comes walking along the churchyard wall, carrying a great load on his shoulders—a one bushel sack. The man with the bag pushed his way through our crossgate, which was not more than about two feet across, so there was no mistaking that he was on his way to our place. I really don't remember whether I recognized him then, but I knew him whenever I saw him afterwards. He was one of those *streðlar* as they were called, or good for nothings, and he rowed out sometimes with my grandfather, or helped him clean fish. He probably owned a small farm in the Skuggahverfi area, though that is not important to my story, and there he lived a bare existence. I think he was called Joi from Steinbær. I tell his tale here because it has been on my mind for a long time, and besides my story would be scarcely half so long if I didn't contrive it so. Yet I intend above all before I tell the story to caution people against believing that now some great event or material for heroic poetry is at hand. Now the man throws off the bag on the front pavement, and sits down on it and begins drying the sweat from his brow with his sleeve. He addresses me, the boy, and asks:

Is skipper Bjorn, your grandfather, free?

When my grandfather had come out of the net shed and around to the front where the sun shone on the fish scales, the guest stood up from the bag, kneeled beside his burden, took off his hat, and began to twist it, bowed his head and spoke:

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I stole this peat from you last night, my Bjorn, from your peat stack over there next to the shed wall.

Well, said my grandfather. That was an evil deed. And it's not but about a week since I gave you a bag of peat.

Yes, I scarcely slept a wink all night because of my conscience, said the thief. I had not the least desire for my coffee this morning. I know I will never see another happy day until you have forgiven me.

Well, that's the difficulty, said Bjorn of Brekkukot; but still try to stand straight on your feet while we speak; and put on your hat.

I think I will never be able to stand up again in my life, said the thief, much less put on my hat.

My grandfather took snuff ceremoniously—well it's not to be expected that your mind should be at ease after such a deed as this, he said. May I offer you some snuff?

Thank you for offering, said the thief, but I think I hardly deserve it.

Well all right, my boy, said my grandfather. But about such a problem I need to think a bit. Won't you please come into the house and drink a cup of coffee while we speak.

They left the loot behind in the middle of the pavement and went in. And the sun shone on the peat-sack.

They went to the sitting room.

Take a seat and show some cheer, said my grandfather. The thief put his crumpled cap under the chair and sat down.

Well the weather is finer now, said my grandfather: I think it has improved each day since mid-April.

Yes, said the thief. It is very fine weather.

I have seldom laid eyes on such spring haddock, said my grandfather: red in the flesh, and fragrant.

Yes, such fine haddock, said the thief.

Or the growth in the fields! said my grandfather.

Well, now that's for sure, said the thief. Such growth!

My grandmother served them. They continued to discuss the weather on sea and land between sips of coffee. When they were finished with the coffee, the thief stood up and said thank

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you with a handshake. He took his hat up from the floor and got ready to say goodbye. My grandfather accompanied him back out to the pavement and the thief continued to crumple his hat between his hands.

Perhaps you want to say something to me before I go, my Bjorn? said the thief.

No, said my grandfather. You have done a deed which God can not forgive.

The thief sighed and said in a low voice: Well my Bjorn, I thank you heartily for the coffee and goodbye and God be with you now and forever.

Farewell, said my grandfather.

But as the guest was going out through the crossgate with his hat, my grandfather called out to him and said: Oh! won't you take that bag there with you and whatever is in it, my boy. One bag of peat doesn't make a damn bit of difference to me.

The thief turned back at the gate, came and took my grandfather's hand again in gratitude, but could not speak. He turned aside while he put on his hat. Then he shouldered the bag again and he was a different man as he went out through the crossgate, the same way as he had come, into this fine weather.

... NOW IT HAS BEEN SHOWN how my grandfather was an orthodox man without it ever occurring to him to ask God to model Himself after men according to that strange Lord's Prayer where it says, forgive us, even as we forgive. My grandfather clearly said to the fellow from Steinbær: God can not forgive you, but it doesn't make a damn bit of difference to me, Bjorn of Brekkukot. Thus I was not above suspecting that my grandfather possessed a special set of standards for most things that happen in the life of a fisherman.

To underline this I shall mention briefly a fishing problem as an example of how we looked at these matters, or more properly stated, an ethical problem connected with fish. It should be said that my grandfather's ideas about commercial fishing had only a limited place in that suddenly developing

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society that was in my youth growing up outside the crossgate at Brekkukot. That is another problem, that we had not yet reached the point where we had become clearly aware of this society that had begun to swell up around us. At any rate I can assert that I was brought up with an attitude toward money which was very far from the bank rates.

I think that our attitude had its origins in my grandfather's opinion that the money which people consider theirs was wrongly accumulated or counterfeited if it exceeded the average income of a working man. And thus all large sums were out of harmony with common sense. I remember hearing him say frequently that he would never accept more money than he had earned.

But what does a man work for, many will ask; how much does a man deserve to get; how much may a fisherman accept? Now in this matter it is a little better to risk being happy than callous. Nowadays any man who rejects the bank's standards must deal with complicated moral problems with his customers on his own often in a day. But those problems never seemed to trip up my grandfather nor cause him any anxiety. Difficulties which to most men would have seemed the beginning of extreme complication he disposed of almost thoughtlessly, with the same kind of assurance as a sleepwalker who threads his way between sixty precipices. Yes, I can say, with the same kind of disrespect for natural laws as a ghost who goes about whole.

I was not very old when I came to the realization that some fishermen were angry with my grandfather because he sometimes sold fresh soup-fish cheaper than other men. They considered it unfair to compete with lower prices against good men. But how much is a lumpsucker worth? Or what is the value of a pound of haddock? Or plaice? Perhaps the closest thing to answering those questions is to say: what does the sun cost, the moon and the stars? I expect that my grandfather answered this for himself, subconsciously: that the right price to set on a lumpsucker, for example, was that price which prevented a fisherman from piling up more money than he needed for the necessities of life.

According to a law of economics men were inclined to in-

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crease the price of fish when fishing was slow or the weather bad, all except Bjorn of Brekkukot. If someone came to him and said: I shall buy from you all that you have in your wheelbarrow today at twice or even three times the usual price, he looked slowly at him who had made such an offer and continued weighing in his scales one pound after another and handing people one lumpsucker after another from his wheelbarrow according to what each man needed for his soup, and at the same price as usual. Now those days came when the catch was good and the weather fine and there was an abundance of all kinds of good fish. On days of this kind the catch always increased as time passed, especially after the decked vessels had begun scooping the fish by the shipload out of Faxaflói—not to mention the trawlers. But when business was brisk and most fishermen felt compelled to lower their market prices, my grandfather never moved to lower his, rather he sold his catch at the same price as he was accustomed to. Then fish from him became by far the most expensive. Thus my grandfather Bjorn of Brekkukot ignored a fundamental point of economics. This man carried within him a mysterious money standard. Was this standard right or wrong? Was the bank's standard perhaps more just? Or the standard at Guthmunsen's store? It may well be that my grandfather's was wrong, but yet not so wrong as to prevent most people who were in the habit of buying fish from him out of his wheelbarrow from trading with him even on those days when fish was more expensive from him than from other men. Everywhere in the city that opinion was heard maintained, even as far as Arnarpost, and what is more, all the way up into Mosfellssveit, that the fish from Bjorn of Brekkukot were more delicate than other fish. People believed that Bjorn of Brekkukot in some mysterious way pulled better and finer fish up out of the sea. And thus all wanted to buy fish from Bjorn of Brekkukot, even on those days when fish was more expensive from him than from other men.

... NOW I HAVE DISCUSSED FISH to some extent, but I have not yet begun to speak of the Bible. I can not leave this subject without mentioning briefly our Bible's price.

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My grandfather Bjorn of Brekkukot was no scholar, I never knew him to read a book except the family book of sermons by Bishop Jon Vidalin—unless I should count that he sometimes ran his eyes over the advertisements in *Foldin*. He read in this Vidalin-book every Sunday just after noon. He usually read correctly but sometimes wrong, though never really well, but he put special emphasis on two things: getting the proper movement into the reading; and second, not omitting those numbers referring to the book, chapter and verse cited from scripture—sometimes often in each sentence. Yet he never filled out the abbreviations in speech, rather he said, for example, mark, rom, cor, hab; nor did he ever have ordinals among those numbers that always accompanied the reference, and he paid no attention to the commas or other marks that stood between the numbers. Instead of reading, for example, First Corinthians, thirteenth chapter, fifth verse (written: 1. Cor., 13:5), he read, one cor hundred and thirty-five. But he never broke however, from this special manner of reading that people here used to have for God's words: this monotonous and ceremonious chant with a high tone and a falling down which ended on a fourth at the end of the sentence. This reading bore no worldly traces, although it had a little in common with the mutterings of some of the mad. The artists who know this chant are no longer born in Iceland.

I am quite unable to say what thoughts were aroused in my grandfather Bjorn of Brekkukot by this book of sermons with its references to the ancient eccentrics from the far end of the Mediterranean Sea, interpreted according to the exceedingly systematic theology of German peasants, like master Jon. Many would consider such spiritual activity as his reading empty formality. I'll swear that I never heard him refer to anything contained in the sermons, nor was I aware of any pious activities of his other than this Sunday reading. Furthermore I have not succeeded in finding anyone who recalls having heard Bjorn of Brekkukot refer to the theological, ethical or philosophical teachings of the sermons. It is hidden from me whether my grandfather paid attention to all that was there, or nothing. He

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may have believed that he was just like those theologians who store their theology somewhere up in a locked compartment in the brain; or perhaps more like those travellers who keep a nativity in a bottle with them in their luggage and carefully fit the stopper so that they will not go down and lose all. I think, if the truth were told, that Bjorn of Brekkukot my grandfather would not have been a different man in any way that matters had he lived here in Iceland in heathen times, or had a home somewhere on the earth where the book of sermons was not read—had instead believed in the bull Apis, the god Ra or the bird Colibri.

From what has just been said it is clear that we were not bookish people. The reading at our place was done mainly by guests who had their own books with them. Sometimes there were stories which they read aloud for everyone to hear, or else they took to reciting *rímur*. The night-guests often left their books behind with us, some put them up in their rooms, and thus our library, this small and haphazard collection, probably came into being. I will refer to it later. But though various books had been accumulated at our place, no one noticed that we at Brekkukot were people without a Bible until that fellow Thordur *skirari* began staying with us. And I have finally reached what was now uppermost in my mind.

There is almost no need to say that according to an ancient Icelandic standard the price of the Bible is equivalent to that of a cow—and it has to be an early-calving cow or six ewes in fleece with lambs. The price stands on the title page of the Bible that was printed in a certain remote valley high in the mountains of northern Iceland in 1584. And Icelanders, as is known, have never believed in any other Bible but this one. This Bible is decorated with artistic printer's devices and woodcuts, weighs five pounds, and is a good deal like a raisin crate in shape. This book has always been present in the better churches of Iceland.

Once as was often the case in the summer a visitor happened into the yard at Brekkukot and said that he had come to Iceland on the steamship. Then he was our guest for some weeks at a time two or three summers later. I still remember how this man

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came walking along the churchyard, in a priest's coat (as Prince Albert coats were called in Iceland), wearing a stiff hat of the type called half-kegs to distinguish them from whole-kegs, but which were also called stove-pipe hats. This man wore a celluloid collar fastened together in the back. This was that fellow Thordur *skirari*, or as he called himself: Thordur the Baptist. But what made me think that here was a new peat thief on his way was the strange realization that this well-dressed man, who at a distance seemed a man of quality in every respect, bore on his back a gunny sack stuffed full of what appeared to me to be peat chunks. But to make a long story short, it was not peat he bore on his back, but mere Bibles. He had no other luggage. I shall not say how it happened that a well-dressed man who came aboard on the steamship itself made straight for our turf house at the outermost limits of the civilized world where the dandelions grew on the roof, instead of checking in at the Hotel d'Islande where he would have fit in well with the big bosses and foreigners.

Thordur *skirari* was a large and distinguished-looking man, with the kind of face which seemed to have had its chin forced up from below and whose remarkably well-formed hook nose pointed down toward the dimple on the chin. His mouth was so tightly held when he was not speaking that his lips disappeared inside and the outer lips were not to be seen. But on the upper lip, which was the weakest and most insignificant part of the whole man, was a short and neatly trimmed mustache. He squinted his eyes together so that they resembled a strainer.

What this fellow Thordur's title Baptist meant we at Brekkukot never quite knew, nor cared to know, and besides we never saw him baptize a single living soul. It was said that he had fallen into religious sects in Scotland and Canada and had surrendered himself to them, and got his bread from them. But there was hardly much left of that bread judging by the way he filled himself up at one of the few free inns in the world during this century or the last. It was probably his duty to make the word of the lord who believes in Baptists widely known in his native city. I have no reason to doubt that this

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fellow Thordur preached out of divine inspiration, anyone would have known that. But such was his inspiration and elevation in preaching that he never cared whether or not there was a person nearby when he preached, except I think (if anything was true) that he preferred having no one. And besides it was really quite seldom that he had an audience unless some boys hid themselves in a nearby barrel in order to find out why so excellent a clerk spoke with such zeal to no one. Unfortunately, I had neither the intelligence nor the maturity, and perhaps not sufficient curiosity, to search out the kernel of Thordur *skírari's* message any more than I had a mind to get to the bottom of my grandfather's sermon reading. Now the indolence of the Iclander has frequently been remarked upon; and it may be that Thordur both knew his countrymen well and was a great Iclander himself. Thus should it so happen that a human being, or more than one, strayed in his direction to where he stood alone in a deserted square preaching, he always turned away and showed his highly esteemed assembly his backside: this conduct he considered most useful if it should change Icelanders' minds for the better. I recall that I went past him one evening down in the field during a storm and in a thick fog and there he was preaching with conviction over some wheelbarrows that lay turned over a short distance away. He stamped with both feet to emphasize his speech and struck the Bible with might and main to confirm his teachings and the froth flew from his mouth in various directions. He spoke against the improper and disgraceful practice involved in baptizing children:

It is found nowhere written in this holy book, he said as he struck the book; nowhere in word or letter or stroke or point is it found written in Holy Scripture that innocent children are to be baptized. Each person who maintains that it stands anywhere written in Holy Scripture that innocent children have to be baptized, he does that on his own authority—and must suffer the consequences.

When Thordur the Baptist had finished his baptistic duties out here in Iceland, it was part of his job to go to Norway and preach there for a time. And it is conclusive proof of what dif-

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ferent people Icelanders and Norwegians are that Thordur the preacher had hardly set foot on land in Bergen before the crowds of people thronged about him to hear his message, so that the police and even the army had to be called out frequently to protect the aged and invalided from being trod under or to prevent the groups for and against this messenger of the lord from doing bodily harm to one another.

In addition to that small living which Thordur may have had from the Scots and the Canadians for turning Icelanders and Norwegians from the baptizing of children, I think that the Baptist had no other belongings except those Bibles that he carried on his back from land to land in a burlap bag. At least no one knew what other valuables he had in his possession.

Now the day came when the Baptist was to leave Iceland and go to Norway to preach fire and brimstone to the people who in that land practiced baptism of children.

During the times he had previously been a guest at Brekkukot for a month or six weeks at a time on his summer journeys, he had always tried to pay for his lodging with a Bible, but Bjorn my grandfather always refused such a gift with the excuse that it was not the custom at Brekkukot to accept a treasure from people in order for them to sleep. On the other hand my grandfather had at first not rejected unimportant Christian pamphlets as gifts from Thordur. But now Thordur was tired of giving small presents and would no longer consider going away and leaving behind a lesser gift than a Bible: If you do not accept a Bible from me this fall, Bjorn, he said, I will understand that you no longer consider yourself my friend; and besides then I would be unable to let it be known that I stayed at your home.

I don't know what the origins of your Bibles may be, my boy, said Bjorn of Brekkukot. In my time it was unknown for Bibles to have lousy type and toilet paper pages.

My Christian conscience stands as a pledge that this Bible which I have in my possession is fine and true, legally printed and faultlessly translated from the original languages by the Bible Society in London.

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In—what? said my grandfather.

London, said the Baptist.

What is that? said my grandfather.

It's the capital of the British Empire, said the Baptist.

Well that may be so, said my grandfather. I know nothing about that. The right Bible here in Iceland was turned into Icelandic and printed up by the late Master Guthbrandur at Holar in the north. I have seen that Bible myself here in the Cathedral. In it stands that it costs a cow. That is our Bible.

Thordur *skirari* spoke: I will not say that my London Bible is not just as good a Bible though it costs but seventy-five *aurar*.

Do you think that Master Guthbrandur was cheating us here in Iceland when he established the price of the Bible at a cow? No my boy, the Bible that Master Guthbrandur published was at the right price. A Bible that cost half a hen—hmm.

My salvation which stands as a pledge for my Bible, is it perhaps worth a turd? said Thordur *skirari*.

I'm not interfering with that, said my grandfather; you have somehow to work that out for yourself. And we are just as good friends whether you travel the high road or the low road.

Our Thordur *skirari* planned to leave on the steamship the next morning. But so it happened during the evening when my grandfather went to wind up our clock for the week, what does he find but one of the fellow's cheap Bibles inside the clock.

My grandfather took the book out of the clock without speaking a word. This must have been about the time that our Skjalda was ready to calve for the first or second time. But the next morning when the Baptist had finished bidding us at the farm goodbye and had gone out with the remainder of the Bibles that he had left in his sack for the Norwegians, and had reached the crossgate, who stood on the path in front of the gate leading a cow, but Bjorn of Brekkukot my grandfather.

Well I'm glad I found you to embrace you, said the Baptist.

God give you good day, my boy, said my grandfather. And since you have left behind an excellent Bible, according to your

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own tale, I mean to hand an excellent cow over to you: a gift looks for a gift.

Oh you have always been a merry fellow, my Bjorn, said the Baptist; he had come out through the gate and intended to kiss my grandfather as he went by, but he could not reach him.

We do not embrace unless we are even, said my grandfather.

The equivalent of the Holy Scriptures turned lazily in the direction of the south pasture and swatted herself with her tail in the morning calm.

My ship is going, said the Baptist.

Here is Skjalda's rope, said my grandfather.

Then they embraced and my grandfather slipped the rope into the Baptist's hand while they did this. My grandfather went in through the crossgate. But when the Baptist had led the cow about a stone's throw away, he dropped the rope and took to his heels towards town.

Then my grandfather took the London Bible out of his pants pocket and said to me, you are swift on your feet, my boy; run after Thordur *skírari* and bring him his book.

The Baptist had become old and short-winded, so I was quick to catch up with him. I handed him his book and he stuck it down into his pocket silently; he continued on to the ship.

... ONE QUIET SUMMER DAY I was sitting out in the graveyard playing on the bench-shaped tomb of Archangel Gabriel, which was so named because there was a marble angel kneeling at the top of it. I looked up all of a sudden and saw a funeral procession coming a ways off, if it could be called a funeral procession. There were no horses. There weren't even any singers. Four men were carrying a short, broad coffin out of the mortuary. I thought that they must probably be burying only part of a body. Two of the men carrying the coffin often did odd jobs in the graveyard, the third was the lame man who usually drove the horses; and the fourth was the now deceased policeman Jonas with the gilt buttons on his jacket. Close behind came the procession itself, which consisted of Sera Johann, the old minister in

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his gowns, and Eyvindur the carpenter, who made the coffins; enumeration closed.

The breeze in the graveyard was extremely invigorating that day, so the men were in good spirits. They caught sight of a little rascal a ways off, though no more than the top of his head was sticking up over the tombs; he was very seriously watching the progress of the procession.

Come over here, my boy, and talk with us, called out Sera Johann. We need a third man.

I scampered over to them out in the path and greeted them and shook their hands and they placed me between Sera Johann and Eyvindur the carpenter and led me along after the coffin as the third man in the funeral procession: all things come in threes.

I've seen you here in the graveyard when we have been performing services, my boy. I wouldn't be surprised if you lived with Bjorn of Brekkukot and that I once baptized you, said Sera Johann.

I don't remember who baptized me, I said. My name is Elfgrimur. Hm-m-m. Is there a man in the coffin?

So to speak, my boy, replied Sera Johann. On the other hand, we do not know for sure who has baptized him or if he has any name at all.

I always baptize sea scorpions before I bury them, I said.

Well, said Sera Johann, we're not burying him because we know who he is, but rather because we know that God loves all men equally. He loves me as much, and no more, as He loves you and Eyvindur the carpenter here who's holding your other hand and just as He loves the man who's lying there in the coffin.

Is it perhaps the man who lay in the mortuary the other day and whose face is gone? I asked.

Yes, the unfortunate soul, said Sera Johann. His face is gone and therefore we do not know who he is. We think we know who he is. But it could just as well be someone else. We know only one thing: God has created all men equal and the Savior came to all men alike.

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The coffin was lowered into the grave and Sera Johann went to the edge and took a bit of earth on his spade and said the usual words; then he took my hand again and led me up to the edge of the grave and said:

Now, Elfgrimur, we are going to sing that psalm which Hallgrimur Petursson wrote for his little daughter for all men who live and die in Iceland.

Sera Johann then began to sing with his weary, old voice, brittle and toneless:

As the one true flower grows in barren ground,

and I held his hand and sang along with my clear child's voice; and thus I began to sing for the world. In a way I felt as if I were somehow chosen to sing for both the living and the dead. Jonas the policeman sang and Eyvindur the carpenter, too. The lame man who owned the horses was also trying his best to sing. And the birds were singing.

When we had finished singing, we stepped back from the grave. Sera Johann was still leading me by the hand. His gown reached down farther in the front than in the back because he was so stooped over.

That was, in the final analysis, a fine funeral, said Sera Johann. A lovely funeral. May God grant that all of us have such fine funerals.

I said nothing as I tripped along beside him as he led me. I really couldn't understand how it could be that Sera Johann thought it was a fine funeral when there weren't even any horses.

The old minister bid me farewell in the gateway of the graveyard.

God bless and keep you, my boy, he said. And if you are ever again playing here in the graveyard when we are conducting a service, and you see that the funeral procession is not very large, I mean a small but good procession like, for example, the one today, then you are welcome to sing with us. Unfortunately, I'm not very good at singing. But although I cannot sing very well, I still know that there is one tone and that it is

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a pure tone. Here are ten *aurar* for you. I send my greetings to Brekkukot, to your grandfather and your grandmother. And I wish to thank them also for your singing.

Golly, but his purse was old and worn. But the ten-*aurar* piece he gave me was beautiful. At that time it could buy twenty caramels.

[When Elfgrimur is sixteen or seventeen years old, he finds himself faced with a moral problem. His struggling with his conscience is not presented directly but the following allegory symbolizes the debate within himself over what is right and wrong.]

... THE BARBER BILL had long been a delicate subject in town. It was a question of whether barber shops should be allowed at all and if so, what restrictions should be placed upon their operation. Should it be tolerated that barber shops be opened at six or seven o'clock in the morning with continuous shaving until midnight? Or should they be closed at a fitting hour before noon and then allowed to be re-opened again for a reasonable length of time in the evening?

The debate was well under way when I arrived at the meeting but there were still many speakers on the waiting list. The hall was jammed and I had to stand by the door. Some carpenter or other was making a speech. He was a very dignified man, with a huge moustache and had a little difficulty finding words to express himself, as is often the case with intelligent men. He said that in his opinion shaving in the morning was a bad habit and that he did not think it right to get the general public into it. He considered shaving to be a vanity which men should allow themselves only when attending meetings or social functions, such as when young men meet others of their own age and entertain themselves in a fitting and proper manner; this referred especially to well-mannered young fellows who were publicly engaged and who were going to meet their sweethearts, let us say once a week. He said that such vanity was not in order when men were at their daily work. His opinion was that, in the unfortunate case that public shaving be allowed at all, it should be limited to evening shaving between,

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for example, the hours of seven and eight and then exclusively for men who were going to public and approved entertainments held with the permission of the authorities. It would not be unfair to require of these men that they show proof that they did not have the opportunity to shave at home.

Next a bearded man, a former farmer in Floi, strode up to the rostrum; he had settled down in town, become a grocer up on Laugavegur and was a man of considerable influence in town affairs. This speaker contended that it was a sign of the softness and slothfulness of the modern age that men dropped into barber shops in the middle of the day and hung around, hour after hour, waiting their turn, wasting many hours in this most deplorable fashion, often indulging in unnecessary and irresponsible gossip and slander about their fellow citizens and griping and grumbling about the municipal authorities, only then to throw their money away to these scoundrels who called themselves barbers. He said that Gunnar of Hlitharendi never shaved, nor any other men of old, except for those who were born with the infirmity that they could not grow a beard, as for example, Njall Thorgeirsson of Bergthorshvoll. He said that those men who wished to be slaves to fashion in this respect should be content to shave once a month and that it could be excused then only if they did it quietly and unostentatiously at home, without the aid of perfect strangers who made a business of it (shaving was a personal matter which all men should attend to in private) and that they at the most should have their wives help them if their hands were not steady, rather than waste time and money in establishments which had no business being there in the first place.

Next came a dark-haired man with a sunken mouth who lipped snuff and mumbled and spit in all directions around the rostrum. He was a good speaker, but a bit excitable. He said that he had no desire to live any longer in the city if he were not free to go where he wished either by night or day and pay craftsmen for doing that work which he required of them. He said that they might just as well forbid the doctors to hold office hours at night as the barbers. He said that it was a bare-faced lie

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that Gunnar of Hlitharendi had grown a beard and challenged the last speaker to prove his assertions with notarized documents. No man of sound mind and body had ever grown a beard. There was not one occupation known to man with which a beard did not interfere. Only sensitive-skinned men grew beards and the only remedy for that ailment was to take them firmly by the beard and drag them back and forth through the whole town. There are few more necessary men in human society than those who shave the beards off other men. In ancient times medicine and barbering were one and the same profession. These men not only shaved the beards off men, but also stuck boils and cut off excrescences since their knives were so sharp. All respectable men shave daily. It is a fine custom to go to the barbershop and talk together with one's fellow citizens about the affairs and problems of the country while one is waiting one's turn; and that money is well invested which comes into the hands of the barber either by day or night.

The next speaker was an emaciated man with a parchment-colored face, dressed in a Prince Albert coat, a monocle and a gigantically high collar. He said that although the professions of medicine and barbering were related in earlier days and although it could certainly be said that shaving was a form of curing of the beard, it was still by its nature hardly moral, either by Christian standards or according to the principles of socialism, to let another man serve one in that way. Such a thing is actually no more than making a slave of another, or at least a lackey. Such degrading service is of little honor to either of the parties, neither to the server nor the served. Service of that type has no place except within the family. It is true that men should shave. But it is just as true that men should shave themselves. There is only one excuse for letting another man cut either one's hair or beard and that is that one's scalp or face is infected and then one ought to visit a doctor. This speaker stressed that the views which he had expressed there that evening concerning immoral and unsocial conduct were in full agreement with the Communist Manifesto which Marx and

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Engels had set forth in 1848 as well as with other theories from London and finally with Bebel's revised doctrine.

On top of this another, in his way not unlearned, man came upon the scene and set forth completely opposite views. He was half-bald and what hair he had was red, with an unruly moustache and a dirty collar and missing quite a few teeth. He had a fine pot-belly and took snuff; the corners of his vest stood out like little pig's ears. He said that as everyone knew, he had been *studiosus perpetuus* in Copenhagen for thirty-five years and had never heard of such views. He said that he certainly did not intend to debate on the basis of Communism or other London ideas, nor on the revised doctrine of Bebel, nor on the basis of Christianity, whether or not shaving was a curing of the beard; but he would like to be permitted to contend that if it were, then it was some sort of unsupernatural curing which simply resulted from applying soap to the faces of men in order to make it more pleasant to remove their beards and that this was a much more pleasant medical practice than applying luke-warm cow manure to a man's face if he had a headache, which cure had long been practiced here in Iceland, although the esteemed previous speaker, bank director, socialist, and theologian had thus far not criticized this practice.

I consider it a great necessity in Iceland to have public shops of good odor where men can greet each other in a friendly manner and wear white gowns and strive to handle sharp knives so carefully that they do not cut other men's throats many times a day which is undeniably a great temptation here in this municipal society. And although I bring up the question of whether or not it is wrong to shave, I believe that the whole matter depends very much upon what meaning one attaches to the word morality; yes, and upon how much one pays per pound of morality. Now I shall tell a parable which will illustrate how greatly moral evaluation varies from country to country.

As you all know, the German Goethe once wrote a book which he called Faust; it concerns a man who became a candidate for Hell for sleeping with a woman. Naturally, other

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things happen in the book, too, but that is the crux of the matter. At the end of the book Goethe stops short of actually sending the man to Hell, although he more than deserved it, but rather allows him to be saved by the grace of God because of his interest in marsh-draining and sends a flock of angels to visit him and lift him up to the ways of the righteous. But now I will tell a story which develops in just the opposite direction. When I was in Copenhagen, there was there at that time a very fine man whose name was Pedersen. He was red-headed and bald, with blackened teeth and used very little soap; as a matter of fact not so very much unlike myself in appearance and experience except for the fact that he was engaged to forty-five different girls. For some strange reason the Danes hauled this fine man into court and began hearing him and his sweethearts. Said sweethearts stood there in court weeping all over each other and although they now and then clawed each other and pulled each other's hair a bit and although they were likely to spit at each other occasionally, they all had one thing in common and that was that they placed themselves completely at the disposal of their fiancé; because each and every one of them was convinced that she was the one true Gretchen—or should we say Maggie—whom he truly loved; each of them had given him her love selflessly; each of them was ready at any time to let him have her last penny so that he could go out and get a glass of beer. All of them had discovered something about Pedersen which they could never evaluate too highly, and his excellence remained unblemished in the esteem of each of them although he was proved to have sinned with all forty-five of them simultaneously. They forgave him not only before men and God, but each of them even swore that she was ready to give up everything for him; many pleaded to be sent to jail in his place if it were necessary at all for anyone to go to jail. Some of them said: if anyone is guilty in this matter, then it is not he, but I! The judges spent many days racking their brains trying to decide which was the greater crime: that one man loved forty-five women or that forty-five women loved one man. The result of all this was that Pedersen received a fine of

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fifty crowns. And since Pedersen was broke as are all lady-killers always, the sweethearts pitched in and paid the fine and as I calculate it, they had to shell out with one crown and eleven *aurar* each. Thus the Danes look at the matter; that for which the Germans will punish a man with no less than Hell, costs in Denmark one crown and eleven *aurar* per stück.

I suggest that this and the barber bill are somewhat similar cases. . . .

[One series of incidents, scattered throughout the book, forms a connected narrative. This deals with a relative of Elfggrimur's grandmother, one Garthar Holm, also known as George Hansen. Newspaper accounts of his concerts all over the world lead all to believe that he is a great and famous singer. He visits Iceland occasionally, but always manages to find an excuse for not giving any concerts. He takes a strong liking to Elfggrimur, who is also interested in music and singing. Once while Garthar Holm is visiting Iceland and has not shown up for a concert which he has promised to give, Elfggrimur, now eighteen years old, finds him hiding in his mother's loft.]

. . . I'D LIKE YOU TO DO me a little favor, said Garthar Holm. Go downstairs and latch the door carefully and sleep here in the loft with me tonight. I would also like to ask you to hold watch and if anyone should knock, go down and tell whoever it may be that Garthar Holm, the opera singer, is not here.

When I had fulfilled his request and fastened the shed door from within and come up to him again, he picked up the conversation where he had left off.

My dear friend, he said. You asked me if I thought that you might learn to sing. I don't know. It may very well be that you have the makings of a singer. It may very well be that the world will give you the best of all that it has. Glory, power, esteem; what more is there? Perhaps palaces and orchards? Or merry widows? What then?

I so much wanted to ask you to teach me just a little something about singing, I said; even though it were only to sing for me just once Der Erbkönig.

There is in existence only one tone, which is all tone, replied Garthar Holm. He who has heard that tone need ask for noth-

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ing more. My singing makes no difference. But promise me one thing: when the world has given you everything; when the merciless yoke of fame has been placed on your shoulders and its brand blazoned on your brow, as indelibly as on that man who was found guilty of the crimes of the world, remember that there is no refuge for you except in one prayer: May God take everything from me—except one tone. . . .

[During his last visit to Iceland, Garthar Holm is exposed as a fake and a scoundrel. He has no compulsions about having deceived everyone for so many years, but does not wish to let his mother find out what he is. He holds for her alone, with Elfggrimur as accompanist, a concert in the cathedral. The old woman is blind and deaf and can neither see that there is no one else present nor hear that her son is not a great singer.]

... THEN THE DOOR of the church was opened and in came two guests: a splendidly dressed man in the prime of life; at his side a poor, old woman. He leads her through the church. She pulls herself along on her weak, numb feet and leans heavily on her son to get the strength needed to move forward. She is dressed in common clothes with her Sunday shawl over her shoulders. She has become small again in that way in which old people shrink, not unlike a small, paralytic girl; and on her face is the expression of the blind and deaf who see other light and hear other sound.

Garthar Holm strode forth with all the bearing of the man of fame, an emperor of art appearing in the sacred halls of Thalia before thousands of eyes of royal, discerning spectators, and in addition swathed in a special admiration from the deeply-moved guests because he was supporting at his side this poor, common woman, his mother: at the peak of his fame he remembers his origins. He nods his head with a polite smile in all directions at the benches of the church, as if he saw there notable faces which he did not wish to fail to show respect for on this festive occasion. There were even here and there some guests who no less than clicked their heels together and bowed before them. And the old woman supported herself on the arm

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of her son as he stopped in the middle of the church and bowed to the noble assemblage.

He leads his mother through the entire church, into the choir, to the chair which has been placed at the altar-rail. He seats her there and makes her comfortable, carefully, painstakingly, with veneration and gentleness, with a touch that tells her that although there are many present of higher rank than she, she need not be ashamed, for this is her place before God and men. And the woman sits there before the altar, transformed and noble in her common clothes and her black Sunday shawl, and folds in her lap her hands, gnarled and swollen, with their dark veins and white knuckles.

Garthar Holm turns to me.

Sit down at the organ, he whispers.

I sit.

Begin playing, he says.

But—but—I reply.

It makes no difference, he says.

But I—I—I—

It makes no difference what you play. I'll sing to anything. Just play!

I had no sooner touched the foot pedals than the organ began to play itself so that the empty church resounded as if everything were going to fall in ruins; all the stops leaked so that the notes bellowed of their own accord with great sucking noises as I trod.

And now Garthar Holm opens his mouth. The concert has begun.

I wish to repeat now that which I have often maintained in these pages, that I am not the man to describe in words the accomplishments of Garthar Holm. We were born and raised each on his own side of the same graveyard and have always been considered to be close relatives and many have confused us, some to the point where they could no longer distinguish between us. But even if that were not so, I would still do my best to do that homage in black on white to the idol of my youth that each man owes himself, despite the doubts expressed by the English master in the thirty-ninth sonnet:

The Fish Concert

Oh, how thy worth with manners may I sing,
when thou art all the better part of me?

I have been asked both before and after: did he sing well? I answer: the world is song, but we do not know if the song is good because we have nothing to compare it with. Some say that the art of song has its origins in the whirring of the solar systems as they rush through space; others in the murmuring of that tree which is called Yggdrasill and which has been sung of in ancient verse: murmurs of the Tree of Life.

Perhaps Garthar Holm was closer to the immeasurable sea of yet uncreated song than most singers. I will not describe the singing of Garthar Holm by comparing it with that of other men who could have sung in the halls of the goddess Thalia in all corners of the world, whether in Teatro Colon, Küsnacht, Saint Peter's Cathedral (or was it perhaps Saint Petersburg?) or for Mohamed ben Ali. But song the likes of which I was audience to in the most unknown of all cathedrals has no other man ever heard; and I think few would have been the same after having heard it, but the ears for which it was intended were deaf.

It may be that it was the only time in my life that I have really heard singing. Because this singing was so true that in comparison with it all other singing is fabrication and dissimulation; all other singers deceivers; and not only singers, but also myself and all of us: the woman from Landbrot no less than Chloe; Ebenezer Dreamman and Captain Hogesen equally and Runolfur Jonsson and the caretaker. The sounds came so close into my being that I felt it as a glorious task to tread that old wreck of an organ with all the strength of my heart and soul in an attempt to envelop that singing or at least meet it half way in hopes of being caught up and carried away by it.

What did he sing? have men asked. I ask in reply: what difference does it make? No, there was no printed program. What songs? Perhaps they were songs in the modern style which will gain recognition if time continues to go back to its origins and the art of expression becomes simpler so that men can agree that to express their every thought they need only cry out the

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single vowel a-a-ah instead of declining nouns and conjugating verbs; it may also be that there was sung that song which the oxen and asses sung to the angels on that evening so long ago. And yet it seems to me that in the middle of this song of times yet to come there were mixed incoherent bits of strange, ancient texts: exultate, jubilate; *si tu ne m'aimes pas, je t'aimes; se i miei sospiri.*

He sang at first with violent gestures which I would have thought more appropriate to a dramatic performance. But perhaps that furious mixture of laughing and sobbing was more correct than other singing and more natural to the creatures of creation than the merciless discipline of the roles on our stage in Brekkukot. Until, a short while later, the singer began to cough and stood before the altar, his face distorted with pain and gasping convulsively for breath; no further sound came forth; he fell on his knees at his mother's feet and buried his face in her lap.

The concert was ended. . . .

[Shortly after this, Garthar Holm takes his life. Sera Johann conducts the funeral service and Elfgrimir sings over the body. A few days later, the grandfather sells his farm, Brekkukot, and with the money sends Elfgrimir abroad to study. They bid him farewell as he leaves.]

. . . WHEN THE BOAT HAD COME several oarstrokes from land they still stood on the shore and gazed after the boy whom an unknown woman had left behind, naked, in their hands. They were holding hands and other men stepped out of their way and I saw no one except them. Or were they, perhaps, so different that other people merely dissolved around them, became mist and disappeared?

When I had come with my bag up onto the deck of the mail ship Northern Star I watched them as they headed home; toward our cross-gate; home to Brekkukot, our farm which was to be levelled to the ground the next morning. They were holding hands like children.

Robert Francis

STELLARIA

Your five white, frost-white
Petals and plum-purple stamens
Stellaria, for a sharp eye
For a fond eye—who
But the botanist ever sees?

Your foliage is weed familiar
But your flower is almost
Like a fairy princess invisible.
Better so. Those who escape
Man's notice escape man's scorn.

To the most proper garden
You come uninvited and unthanked
Before or after the planted
Plants, schooled for an early
Winter and a late spring.

Easier larger flowers than you
I would not slander. Under
The sun all are equal.
And yet your very smallness
Like modesty is a jewel.

For I am not unprejudiced.
The unpromoted flower I prefer
Far from a florist window
As you, starwort, are far.
How cool, unqualified, your gaze.

Gray Burr

GENESIS

The primal work was nearly done.
A hand ripped out an excess range,
Dropped a sea there in exchange,
Reached an aeon, lit the sun,

Then with a gesture made a park
Too perfect. In its absolute
A mind mislaid an alien root.
Slowly the sixth day grew dark.

In the evening, just at rest,
A face like Asias without span
Twitched once with the tic of man
But smoothed again, the thing expressed,

And turned away to other skies,
Already musing on a sun
Where something better might be done
And, conceivably, more wise.

AFTER THE FIRST REFUSAL

After the first refusal, consciousness came.
The flowers flared; the sun blared like a brass.
Beast and bird slept their beatitudes.
To man alone fell a choice of attitudes.
Man fell alone to a knowledge of his name.

And the earth revolted, marched against him then,
Against the only thing that knew, that could
Conceive an opposite, make Will a fool,
In even that vise of a hand be a turning tool.
Whatever the cost, the curse, Man would be men.

Lost was the likeness of lions, the dullness of doves.
Original Sin stared down with a murderous smile.
"Give them an inch of knowing, they'll take a mile,"
Something said, that no longer wanted their loves.

CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE

Wildflowers came up all spring, the snowdrops first,
Then bluets and marsh marigolds where not
A hand had planted for an eye athirst.
A beauty so gratuitous begot

A kind of debt. Disorder's gift, unsent,
Was yet received and cared about till thus
The season's fragrant petalled accident
Found end in us, an aim in aimlessness.

Unmelting petals from the apple tree
Like lightest snow lay in the green grass,
Deepening with their winter mimicry
A sense of summer coming on at last.

But merely to wait and watch the making weather
Had never been enough. I'd take a hand.
Put in a rose or two. We'd work together.
It was a challenge I could understand.

FULFILLMENT

If once you dropped in the strange well a pebble
and waited, hushed, while silence grew louder than sound
till up the dark came at last the tiniest treble
plink of expected sound, then you can know how round-
ly you fill my sight at a day's end when,
dwindled by blocks of distance, you first strike
my expectation's wound-up pitch and then
fill all my hollow with a rich low hum
like a plucked bowstring's, but sweeter, more like
a guitar's, struck full of a chord by a strum.

THE BUTTERFLY

Tracer of wind's contour by line of flight,
His weightless leaves of color caper in air.
How rootlessly his color grew wings' flair:
You've seen him shut

And open and shut in slow winks on a twig
Or a cannon where he can most thoroughly please
By irony our taut taste for antitheses.
For he's not big

And, soundless, opposes the burly and loud. When
Children fish him from blue air he shapes
By crisp of wing, their love, like ours, is perhaps
Too crude to plan

Fit action for its object. He can't last
Without a sting. But now his jerking yellows
Puppet the eye in the wind's blue shallows
And purely contrast

The dull arrest of things. He is a locus
Of precision's myth in whose dissolving change
The worm climbs wind and we the range
Of all our focus.

THE AGGRESSOR

He was that battlefield of muddy, torn,
And bursting earth we all have sometime known.
A civil war begun when he was born
Ravaged the land between his blood and bone.

Upon such country crops could never grow.
His sun was fever and his rain was sweat.
Troops of his being froze in bloody snow
Or drowned in seas of tropical regret.

He found no middleground. No armistice
Was ever signed between his impulse and
The enemy dilemma's terms of ice.
His heart took on the look of No Man's Land.

Thus savage was the scene. How would it end?
When would the slaughter of the self be done?
Only the foreign wars would ever mend
A civil conflict that could not be won.

THE FALLACY REVISITED

"Summer is over," you said, and here and there,
As though they had just understood your words,
A branch began to burn, sumac to flare,
And an oak released a southbound flight of birds.

It was only that we noticed weather then,
In the sudden chill, not that we thought the season
Implicated thus in the plights of men.
Pathetic so to think we are told by reason.

But, if discrete, we stood in an apt setting;
Suited, nonetheless, by leaf and blade
That seemed to share with our hearts a great blood-letting,
And we walked, appropriate, in the dying glade.

Constance Hunting

MISS DICKINSON

She cut the wrapping paper neatly
into rectangles—no one would ask why,
it was New England's way—you saved
against the day. No matter what

the parcel had contained,
butcher's delivery, book
by some downstate sage, immediate
scissors flamed in her pocket.

New England makes its women
strange now and then—they take
to cats, or murder, often
in multiples; but she,

compound of thrift and greed
in primstitched white, preferred
to catechize mortality
in the side yard, and afterward

scratched on what leaves
(maple, perhaps, or elm)
only an oracle of Amherst,
Massachusetts, could command

the gist of the matter. Thrift
may have special uses—
likely the household's
other women saved the string.

Chard Powers Smith

Semi-Classical Poetry and the Great Tradition

ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT the recent Semi-Classical school, associated with Mr. Eliot and Mr. Pound, is passing out of fashion, it is perhaps time to speculate as to what its permanent relation, or lack of relation, may be to the main stream of English, and later Anglo-American, poetry. Since the thirteenth century that stream has passed through three long reaches: first, a dominantly romantic one, relatively swift and turbulent, running from the fourteenth century to the mid-seventeenth; second, a dominantly classical one, relatively slow and orderly, running from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth; and, third, another romantic one running from the mid-eighteenth until such time, presumably in the late twentieth, as a new classical flow will have replaced it. The historical question would seem to be whether the recent semi-classical phenomenon is in the great tradition, already marking a major change in the poetic current from the late romantic stretch into a new classical one, or whether it has been only another of those briefly fashionable eddies, like euphuism in the sixteenth century, spasmodicism in the nineteenth, or imagism in the twentieth, which have no definitive relation to the main flow.

A common flaw in contemporary literary perspective, imposed by the semi-classicists through their New Criticism since their ascendance in about 1940, is to date that ascendance from the early twenties. It is true that Hulme's influence on Mr.

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Eliot's *The Waste Land* represented the theory and the practice, the law and the prophet, of the then nascent school. But for another decade and a half it remained no more than an *avant-garde* eddying in revolt along the basic romantic current, the somewhat homely phase of the general romantic current that had become dominant about 1910. Whether the shift of fashion to semi-classicism that centered around 1940 represented a definitive change in the historical flow or whether it simply continued a transitory eddy, is the question we are considering. Until that is resolved, it will be convenient still to envisage modern American poetry as one continuous movement dating from the revolt against the poetry of the late nineteenth century which we are pleased to blame on the British by calling it Victorian. Beginning to stir in the 1890's, this revolt was integrated and successful by about 1910, and since then modern American poetry has passed through these two phases: Homely Romanticism, which lasted until about 1940; and Semi-Classicism, which lasted from then until about 1960. At the moment it seems to be entering a third phase under the leadership of young poets who are looking at least askance at their parents, the semi-classicists and their new criticism, and at least curiously at their grandparents, the "Renaissance of 1912" and its homely romanticism. The question becomes whether, or to what extent, this curiosity, when it is integrated, will reaffirm the traditional romantic current, or whether, or to what extent, it will lapse into a continuation of the recent trend toward a new, truly classical age.

The chief qualities of Victorian poetry against which homely romanticism revolted were stereotyped emotions, sentimentality, bombast, poetic subjects, poetic "thoughts," poetic language, the moral standard of criticism, and divine inspiration. Throughout the last half of the nineteenth century Whitman was hewing away at all these poses. But he was a lonely prophet, a voice in the wilderness, rather than the source of the new poetry which presently honored him, as it did Poe for some purposes, and denied him, as it did Poe, for others. The consistent revolt began in the nineties when young Robinson

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and Frost, without knowledge of each other, started experimenting with the then revolutionary notions which have remained the foundations of all our modern poetry: namely honest, individual emotion, the language of common speech, the availability of anything as material for poetry, the aesthetic standard of criticism, hard work and imagination as the sources of inspiration in place of divinity. In conformance with these aims, they both dealt with simple, somewhat Wordsworthian people for characters, spoke in a colloquial idiom and eschewed all flamboyance. It is because most—though not all—of the large poetic population of the second, third, and fourth decades of this century followed them in these three respects that I am calling the whole movement homely romanticism.

In a large sense, what Robinson and Frost were doing was to take positions of leadership in the aesthetic aspect of the then gathering revolt against the whole standardized, emotionally artificial fabric of late nineteenth-century American culture. By 1910 the revolt was in full swing on every religious, intellectual, social and economic front. Lindsay, Masters, Harriet Monroe, Amy Lowell, the early Mr. Pound and many others helped integrate the poetic aspect of it in the "Renaissance of 1912" with its codification of Robinson's and Frost's ideas into what are still the three organic laws of modern poetry, professed by both the homely romantics and the semi-classicists: Reality of Experience, Reality of Expression, and Conscious Artistry. The poets, with their retinue of critics and increasingly converted public, were "unacknowledged legislators" in a wonderfully swift and thorough revolution. Between 1910 and 1920 every significant feature of the very highly perfected system of Late Victorianism was expressly denied, deliberately violated and removed from the textbook of youth.

Thus the Lost Generation, the generation following Robinson and Frost and comprising their younger contemporaries, found themselves straddling a gulf. Having been born in the nineties and so raised in the old elaborate system, they assisted in its destruction in their youth and faced maturity without any god, any philosophy, any social beliefs, any ethic. Their only

concrete affirmation was of the doctrine of self-expression, divided into the related channels of sexual expression, as conveniently adapted from Freud, and aesthetic expression under the manifestos of 1912. As for any beliefs that might give integrated meaning to individual or social life, they stood precariously over a void where not even the wreckage of their native Victorianism remained. The effort to fill the void with a new spiritual, intellectual and social structure, a new culture, began immediately with these intellectuals, and it continues today. Some advance toward a humanist ethic has been made. But no comprehensive interpretation of life or the puzzle of Being has gathered momentum.

On the contrary, the general imaginative and spiritual trend of successive youth has for fifty years been less upward towards any new affirmation than increasingly downward into positivist common sense, relativism, pluralism and negation that varies from gentle agnosticism to aggressive cynicism and nihilism. In this descending procession the homely romantic poets of the twenties hold a paradoxical position. As leaders of the great demolition they were more deliberately and actually destructive than any leadership or any generation that has followed them; but at the same time they were more affirmative, instinctively. They had been bred in a time when almost everybody still suspected that there was some Meaning of life and the cosmos—usually called God. Whatever their rational iconoclasm might be, they were supplied by inheritance and early environment with a boundless world of fancy and a habit of affirmation that must try to realize it with imagination. However profound the disillusionment out of which they spoke, their poetry, therefore, made absolute demands upon the human and cosmic continuum and it made them with all the power of compressed frustration. Whether the truth they arrived at involved absolute negation or absolute affirmation, their combined poetic output between about 1910 and about 1940, and most richly in the twenties, contains more of both imaginative or poetic perception and the inclusive sweep that is greatness than does

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the combined output of all the rest of American literary history.

Of the fifty or sixty poets of the twenties who enjoyed respectable publication and respectable notice, including the ten or a dozen frequently proclaimed as great, all but four or five were of the homeliness I have mentioned. In order to identify their romanticism it is necessary to apply once more the four ancient, over-worked, but always sound distinctions between romanticism and classicism generally. Under each of these antitheses the dominant poetry of the three decades under discussion falls on the romantic side.

First, the aura of it was relatively *Emotional* rather than *Rational*. The conscious artifice of the surface of the poem was thin enough to let through more of the light of the original, unconscious, imaginative perception than comes through in classical poetry. In making these common distinctions it is, of course, always necessary to remember that they are matters of degree. Supposedly "cold" reason is a rudimentary form of "hot" imagination. Each is a magic leap of the mind, confronted with data, to a resolution called a conclusion in the case of reason, and a perception in the case of imagination. The difference in "heat" is a function of a difference in direction of the leap. In a classical poem the leap of reason is outward, not only to perfect the surface of the poem but to synthesize consciously the object observed with other objects or cases and to integrate them into a concept, principle or law. In a romantic poem, the leap of imagination is inward to perceive subconsciously a new and essential quality of the object, whether it be an image, a cosmos or anything between. In both leaps there is pleasure. But in the romantic poem it is more concentrated and strong. In the classical poem it is more stately, cooler, more widely diffused in universal application. Verticality against horizontality. Chartres against the Parthenon.

Because the difference is in degree not extreme enough to be a difference in kind, both kinds of poetry involve the same basic elements. There is no excellent classical poem without visible traces of passionate, imaginative perception, no excellent romantic poem without its surface polished into appropriate

rhetoric. *Paradise Lost* opens and continues on the whole a classical work of tremendous fancy, rhetoric and conscious craftsmanship; but consider the romantic heat of imaginative perception when Satan exhorts Beelzebub to continue the war on God. So of the last line of *On His Blindness*. So of the hundreds of hotly perceived images in Pope. And the romantic opening of *Dover Beach*. Not to mention those marginal classicists, Crashaw and Marvell, whose body of subconscious and emotional imaginative perception gives the romantics a plausible claim on them. Conversely, how are we to classify the beautifully worked surfaces of Keats's romantic luxuriance and motility? Or of Tennyson's *Ulysses*? And the Dryden-like rhetoric that ends the page and a half of great romantic poetry in *Snowbound*. Between these classical and romantic poems there is enough difference in the thickness of the rational, conscious surface to justify the standard distinction. But it is important to remember that each type of poetry at its best contains much of the other's prerogative. Classicists and romanticists agree on the definition of poetry as the unliteral or tropeic use of language to stimulate the imagination of the reader to a recognition of the poet's original, subconscious perception. And they agree that the language in the finished poem must have suffered long under the pruning knife and the file. They agree also on the difference between the ornamentation of fancy and rhetoric and the reality of imagination. They agree upon the ingredients, and they understand each other. They disagree only on emphasis, on the proportions of the prescription.

Second—continuing the pairs of opposites used to distinguish romanticism and classicism—the homely romantics of the twenties were relatively *subjective* rather than *objective* in motivation, concerned initially with themselves and their feelings about the object rather than with itself in its externality. This distinction, while sound, must be qualified by the reminder that where the original subjective, romantic emotion moves out into the object, as it usually does, it penetrates it more intimately than does the classical, originally objective impulse, the latter being content to describe in detail the surface

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of the object together with its significant, external relations. The standard contrast is between Gray's classical *Elegy*, with its smooth surface and large rhetorical statement, and Crabbe's romantic *Village*—published only thirty years later—which expresses the poet's personal identification with the rural poor and actually portrays them to the reader's imagination.

Third, under what is perhaps the easiest basis of distinction between romanticism and classicism, most of the poetry of the twenties, especially the great poetry, was, as I said before, vital, aspiring, *motile* as distinguished from *static* in the way of classical poetry. The romantic is always going somewhere, searching for "far off things." He is bound for a country in whose reality he believes though he has not seen it. He is a potential mystic in search of transcendental truth. The classicist, on the other hand, knows where he lives, he knows the limits of his house, and of his country. He takes his stand in truth already surveyed and recorded.

As corollary to the motile aspect of romantic poetry, combined with its subjective aspect, it is sometimes said that it is the poetry of adolescence and barbarism; it is not sure of its place in the world and is trying to find it. These qualifications are usually laid upon romanticism for vituperative and flippant purposes. But as seriously applied, they are just. The romantic poet—indeed the poet generally—is one who will not make his peace with the actual world of standardized good and evil, formal justice, the figments of practical common sense and the arbitrary sequences of time.

Fourth, there is the traditional charge that romantic poetry is *obscure* where classic poetry is *clear*. As between the homely romanticism of the twenties, as well as the standard romanticism of the early nineteenth century, and the true classicism of Milton, Dryden and Pope, this charge is just. For clarity in the prose sense is a primary aim of classical verse. But as made by our recent semi-classicists, the charge is of course absurd. For obscurity is one of their central and professed virtues.

The differences between romanticism and classicism are sufficient to have motivated many battles of many books. And they

will continue to do so because both impulses are essential in the human adventure, and neither has meaning but by reference to the other. Romanticism is the aspiration toward the solution of the central puzzle that is the earliest experience of consciousness. And classicism is the pattern of the solution, the perfection, which romanticism is seeking. The demands of both are at all times active in healthy minds. For poets, while they are poets, there is an alternation of climb and consolidation, climb and consolidation. Mr. Eliot, having adopted classicism and fathered semi-classicism, came back in the *Quartets* to emotional, subjective, motile and clear romanticism, and confessed that his end was his beginning.

Before applying the four criteria to our recent semi-classicism, it may be helpful to recall the sources of the movement. Rising in the modern principles of honest emotion, honest expression and conscious art, it received three other contributing currents, each classical in quality and for the most part imported from Europe.

The first and main source was the French Symbolist movement, the child of Baudelaire with Poe as godfather. Its instance was the discovery by the French of what had always been the genius of English poetry: namely, the subconscious perception of tropes to name significant details of objects and so to give them a fresh reality in the reader's imagination. Having discovered the process, the French must in the course of French nature make conscious and rational what for centuries in England had been subconscious and imaginative. For the intuitive metaphor and simile they substituted the concocted "symbol" by means of which they aimed to express emotions subtler and more obscure than any that poets had attempted before, so subtle and obscure that the French Symbolists or "hermetics" admitted that few outside their company would be able to grasp them. Mr. Pound and Mr. Eliot, discovering later in LaForgue and Corbière this perversion of English poetry, re-imported it as a *dernier cri*. And presently Mr. Eliot was celebrating conscious rationalism in a pronouncement that the truly

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classical poets of England and America would reject as flatly as the romantics would. He begins with a sound statement: "The intensity of the poetry is something quite different from whatever intensity in the supposed experience it may give the impression of. . . ." (True as between the original, subjective emotion and the poem, though not as between the intermediate imaginative perception and the poem.) Then follows the central doctrine of semi-classicism: "As our instincts of tidiness imperatively command us not to leave to the haphazard of unconsciousness what we can attempt to do consciously, we are forced to conclude that what happens unconsciously we could bring about, and form into purpose, if we made the conscious attempt."

In the first statement quoted there is implicit an incidental doctrine of the semi-classicists. This is the doctrine that the finished poem is the whole thing, to be criticized without relation to any "content" or original motivation. Thus, the quantitative standard of greatness is dismissed. For that standard to be applied, a poem must have a subject, a substance, which can be paraphrased, however inadequately, in prose. Contributing to the general aura which is the whole meaning of the poem, and visible through its surface, is the poet's imaginative percept of certain material which took his concentration before he started to write; and this percept, however transmuted in composition, is the "subject" of the poem. In some minor poetry of charm, especially where the phonetic component is dominant, this subject may be too insubstantial to be identified through its costume. But in great poetry the size and the reality of this percept are the criteria of the greatness, and these qualities can be presented to the simple recognition in the approximation of prose as readily as they can be presented to the imagination in the greater precision of poetry. Without great content there is no great poetry. The imagists first proscribed the "glittering generalities" of the sentimentalists, then proceeded to extend the taboo to include all large evocations. And the semi-classicists went on to declare that the poem has no content at all. For two literary generations, while the word "romantic" has been

debased by the teachers of youth, the word "great" has been stricken from the critical vocabulary or used simply as a synonym for "excellent." Poetry can hardly be squeezed smaller.

One of the incidental poses of the semi-classicists is the condescending one that romantic and classical poets are incomprehensible to each other. Mr. Eliot professes superciliously that he cannot decipher the clear tropes of Shelley, which any child can understand, or Keats's prosaic statement of an aesthetic theory that beauty and truth are the same. And Shakespeare's barbarisms, of course, are sometimes a little hard for us to stomach. In his essay on Dante Mr. Eliot seems to have disciplined himself, through his denial of the traditional, subconsciously perceived English metaphor, to a condition of stolid insensitivity. Citing Augustus's speech over dead Cleopatra,

She looks like sleep,
As she would catch another Antony
In her strong toil of grace . . . ,

he states that the purpose of the terminal metaphor "is to add [italics Eliot's] to what we see . . . a reminder of that fascination of Cleopatra which shaped her history and that of the world. . . ." This "addition," he says, is "*expansive rather than intensive*" (italics mine). Thus he misses entirely the romantic, inward movement of the imagination evoked by the tremendous pun of the metaphor, making us feel, right before us in this corpse, a charm equivalent to the irresistible Grace of God. Here we have another example of the tendency of the romantic imagination to penetrate to the inner significance of its object, while the classical imagination delineates its surfaces and external relations.

Besides the importation of the rational, conscious, Gallic "symbol" to displace the imaginative, subconscious trope, a second important tributary to semi-classicism was the misapplication by Mr. Pound and Mr. Eliot of the theory of traditionalism which in its true classical basis is so well stated in one of Mr. Eliot's finest essays. In application they used the doctrine to justify not only the incorporation into poetry of recondite

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references to ancient expressions, the more obscure the better, but also the insertion of whole passages from the works of the past, preferably in foreign languages. The method was introduced in *The Waste Land* in 1922, and its high esoteric appeal led away the first few, precious deserters from the army of homely romantic poetry which was just then winning recognition by a purchasing public and starting a run of fifteen or so more years of success.

A third tributary—only partly foreign, for it merely exaggerated the homely romantics' doctrine of conscious art—was the increasingly minute critical analysis of poetry into its phonetic and cognitive atoms. Beginning with Hulme and Richards, it proceeded through three decades of treatises,* of which I am assuming Mr. Brooks's *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (1939) to be the paean of victory of the semi-classicists. These works and their equivalents in the reviews and the anthologies, representing both the substantial and the technical aspects of the French rationale adopted with symbolism, were collectively the new criticism. By the end of the War it had captured most college English departments and was proceeding not only to suppress the romantic poetry of the twenties but also to teach two generations of students that romantic verse generally was something barbarous, disorderly and beneath contempt. In most of the academic world this taboo upon about three-quarters of Anglo-American poetry still holds. So conditioned by it is the generation of college teachers now in their forties and fifties that any preference for romantic poetry over semi-classical poetry commonly horrifies them as an attack on poetry itself.

The semi-classical movement, while rich in critics—including most of the poets themselves—and integrated in criticism, has been poor in poets and diffuse in poetic performance. If we

* My own *Pattern and Variation in Poetry* (1932) was among these; but as a qualification of technical analysis, this book was at pains to state that imaginative perception and composition were functions of the subconscious, thus committing untidiness and disqualifying my book for the shelf of the new criticism.

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count Mr. Eliot as an American, its addicts would claim, I believe, six poets for its gallery of greatness. Of these Crane and Mr. Eliot have at least as much romantic as semi-classical poetry in their work of large caliber; Dr. Williams, while both classical and semi-classical in static factuality and impersonality, is classical and anti-semi-classical in clarity, and homely romantic in human material; Mr. Ransom, while preaching obscurity as a critic, is clear, and therefore purely classical rather than semi-classical, in his own poetry. Only Stevens, Mr. Pound after War I, and a few minor figures fulfill consistently the requirement of the consciously constructed, undecipherable cross-word puzzle. The aggressive strength of the movement has been the most militant and ruthless literary coterie America ever had, bound together by personal friendship and common social prejudices, with four or five of the members settled in strong academic or journalistic posts from which they support each other's assaults and enfilade each other's fronts. Of four poets in this central praesidium, Mr. Warren and Mr. Davidson are pure romantics—Mr. Davidson a great one—and Mr. Ransom is, as I have said, a true rather than a semi-classicist. But in the common interest they are able to overlook or explain away each other's deviations.

In substance the movement has been negative; this conforms to the popular negativism of the period, and is appropriate to its diminutive preciousness and denial of content and greatness. It is gratifying that Mr. Eliot, the effective source of semi-classicism and its one generally recognized great poet, mastered his instincts of tidiness and began easing out of the movement in the late twenties. First with *Ash Wednesday* (1930) he moved into humbly hopeful romantic affirmation, subsequently in the *Quartets* into qualified mystical realization, and finally in *The Cocktail Party* into full mystical realization. Meanwhile, as his imaginative or spiritual world widened, he discarded most of the obscurantist affectations upon which the movement had been founded. It may well be that in the long historical run the distinguishing features of the movement will have had no

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more meaning than as a reflection of a phase of Mr. Eliot's development.

A glance at our four antitheses between romanticism and classicism shows why the movement has been one of criticism rather than of poetry, intellectual rather than emotional, at best semi-, and in considerable part pseudo-classical. *First*, under the distinction between *reason* and *emotion*, it has justified and over-justified itself, doing its best to suppress the "haphazard of the unconscious" and to elevate poetry to the level of a precise science, complete with footnotes. In its orthodox offerings composition has become the conscious concoction of a puzzle out of deliberately adopted "symbols" or "myths" instead of the instinctive perception of tropes which moved from the poet's imagination to the reader's. Appreciation has become the studious excavation, with the help of reference books, of some "key" that will "break" the puzzle. In place of the strong, subconscious joy of the imagination in reading a poem, we are offered the conscious, smiling self-gratification of solving an equation. There is indeed a fine sense of satisfaction in feeling that, after some analytical labor, you have broken the esoteric barrier in a poem of Stevens or a phrase of Mr. Pound. It is a sense of triumph. But it is not the pleasure of appreciating poetry.

In this substitution of calculation for imagination, the semi-classicists attempted a departure from the whole poetic tradition, classical as well as romantic, so great in degree as to comprise a difference in kind. For classicism professes its element of imagination as jealously as romanticism does, differing only in the degree to which the surface of the expression should be veneered with conscious art. The versified puzzle is as great a perversion of the tradition of Milton and Dryden as the nineteenth-century verse of sentimentality and vicarious experience was a perversion of the tradition of Chaucer, Shakespeare and Keats. The two great alternating currents of Anglo-American poetry are more congenial to each other than either is to these eddies of fashion that bubble up on each of them, roll along briefly, and vanish without effect on the main flow.

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Under the *second* common antithesis between romantic and classic poetry, the *subjective* versus the *objective*, the semi-classicists have provided several poems which seem to present, over their obscurity, the smooth, impersonal surface of classical poetry. On the other hand, most of the memorable work of their two leading talents, Crane and Mr. Eliot, lets through the glow of subjectivity, actually the romantic quest.

Third, motile versus static quality: All of the semi-classicists except Crane and the later Mr. Eliot were indeed static, but their station was not within a settled culture or institution in the fashion of traditional classicism. Having, like Mr. Eliot, repudiated their native culture, they did not, like Mr. Eliot, identify themselves with another to provide them with a new orthodoxy, a new classical frame. What they had around them to support them was only the projection of their own negation, the hatred of America which pointed in the direction of the anti-culture of the Beatniks. This hardly gave them such a classical foundation as is provided by the Roman Catholic Church or the Kingdom of Great Britain, or indeed by either of the two decrepit but existing cultures of the United States.

Fourth, obscurity versus clarity: Obviously, by these criteria the semi-classicists were farther from classicism than were the homely romantics. I suggested as the sources of their obscurity French symbolism and the exotic snobbery that delighted to parade recondite allusions and passages from alien and ancient literatures. But besides these trivial elements there was another which, while seeming as transitory, may evince an actual trend in our history. I refer to the abandonment by the semi-classicists of any purpose to speak to an indifferent public. Some such defiance, of course, all young artists proclaim at some time with sophomoric finality. But the semi-classicists in their supposed maturity continued to spurn their potential American readers. And in this renunciation of communication they may have been leading a trend in our literature more significant than anything that either romanticism or classicism has introduced since the invention of the printing press and the spread of literacy. Their excuse is the familiar state of virtual illiteracy in America. One critic says for them, "Since you won't

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read me, I'll make sure you can't." He is excessively rhetorical about the overwhelming number of Americans who read no book a year, whose imaginations are subserved to the pulps, the slicks, the movies, the *Reader's Digest* and T.V., as are those of their children to T.V. and the comics. And another new critical critic refers with high satisfaction to this herd and its emotions as "servile." Elsewhere, the same critic refers to "the crass question of the poet's 'contribution to society.'"

Thus the obscurantists, while often parading their devotion to "excellence," abandon the relationship that recognized poets have always enjoyed with the aristocracy, the educated class, of their countries, hoping through them to be the "unacknowledged legislators of the world." Thus the semi-classicists relinquish all the responsibilities of aristocracy, and all its prerogatives except the dubious one of exclusiveness, the elevation of themselves to an elite with no responsibility except to promote and gratify itself. Thus they dismiss their sufficient public in that small educated group in the population, that two or three million who comprise the nearest to an aristocracy we have left. They are the serious people, the "egg-heads," who still have a little prestige, all the way from timid, local "culture" groups to high academics and the liberal rich. In proclaiming their unwillingness, or confessing their inability, to lead them, the semi-classicists have shown themselves contemptible. But beyond that, their disclaimer of social concern and responsibility may be prophetic of a new and real, though by all traditional standards also contemptible, world.

On the assumption that the semi-classical movement has run its course, I want to offer three guesses as to what kind of poetry—which will depend largely on what kind of world—will succeed it. Of these guesses, the realization of the first would preclude that of the other two. But the second and third, if my analysis of romantic and classical poetry is sound, are not in the long run mutually exclusive.

I. "The Lonely Crowd"

A plausible interpretation of the semi-classical movement in its irresponsible obscurity and petty exclusiveness would be

that it is an aspect of the current splintering of society into specialties, leaving no all-inclusive unity or universal ideas appropriate to the whole population, the whole "crowd." Everyone is to be identified with some group which preempts his loyalty and provides the entire horizon for his imagination, leaving no common interests and truths that unite him with all men—no more words like "society," "humanity," "right" and "true," let alone "the universe," "eternity" and "God." Poetry, like radar or supersonics, will be a special interest requiring special training both to produce and to consume, a luxurious specialty in which only the initiated will have any share. Like the other groups, the poets will enjoy a naïve ethic holding that tolerance of and kindness to people in other groups is a good thing. But no community of aim will be recognized, no principles applicable outside the limits of the group. As indicated in *The Lonely Crowd*, we have already approximated such a honeycomb life in economic, political, geographic and social interests. And in science it has reached the point of mutually incomprehensible vocabularies in different divisions of the same field. It would seem natural to recognize one or more such separated bees' nests in the arts also, beginning with one inhabited by artists who have already renounced any relationship to society and any ideas which might help to hold a general culture together, ideas such as great poets often provide a few generations ahead of time, ideas such as those the semi-classicists have eschewed as "servile."

Certainly we are in a period of contracting literary outlook appropriate to such a social fragmentation into a continent of federated anthills. In almost every department of letters it is assumed that "great" or inclusive concepts are dangerous. They are dangerous socially because in the past they have led to fanaticisms, persecutions and wars. They are dangerous personally because they lure you with mirages the quest for which will lead you into neurosis in the desert. High critical praise describes authors as "realistic" or "mature," meaning that they are negative, cautious, gently cynical. They have come by the startling intelligence that life is precarious and that if you

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gamble for high stakes you will probably lose! One contemporary critic performs antics to show that the "other Frost"—apparently the real Frost, represented dubiously by two or three of his lesser poems—is negative and disillusioned, primarily concerned with "the deprived and the dispossessed." One wonders what Mr. Frost's Yankee farmers would think if they heard themselves called such fancy names!

We are far gone in a Lilliputian proto-humanism, not yet organized even around large humanistic ideas. The prophet of our tired age is the popular aspect of Camus, the role in which he assures us that the profession of absolutes is vicious. It will lead to inquisitions and fascisms. The things that faith has accomplished for mankind are not worth their fringe of evil. Religion is identical with doctrine, and all doctrine is autocratic, inhuman, deadly. Let's have no more talk of religious truth, or philosophical truth, or ideal political systems. They are all part of composite evil, the plague of the world. Stand in revolt against them, but don't propose a system of your own to replace them, lest so much affirmation lead you also into violence. In social terms be negative. Be affirmative only in personal terms. Be kind to all individual persons, but don't call yourself a Christian. Let there be no imaginative sanctions more inclusive than those of art, no toying with mysticism, no more involvement with the enigma of Being which it has been man's prerogative to address. Do not look beyond the horizons of positivism. Blind yourself to all figments but those of non-committal common sense. Burn all works of general appeal, all poetry before *The Waste Land*. Keep the imagination down . . . down . . . down. . . .

For the long run some such contraction of the human mind is a possibility, even a probability. But for the short run the indications are against it. On the contrary, we seem to be headed for a revival of the traditional standards of poetry, whether classic or romantic, and specifically for the abandonment both of obscurantism and of the taboo upon great content. In the excellent anthology *The New Poets of England and America*, and generally in such work of younger poets as I have read,

there is an unmistakable reawakening of interest in the larger capacities of the human imagination and in the traditional methods of implementing them. Among the thirty-five Americans in *The New Poets* I find only two or three who write like semi-classicists, substituting the novelty of obscure contrivance for originality of perception of the real. All the rest are as clear in expression as the poets of the twenties. Five of the thirty have returned either to fully realized mysticism or to romantic affirmation, and at the other end of the scale ten are shadowed by cynicism. The true quality of the new trend, perhaps the quality of the next phase of our society, is probably intimated in the remaining twenty who have discarded semi-classicism as far as obscurity and conscious concoction go, but in their attempts at affirmation have reached only a middle height.

These possible harbingers of the future retain in their style the sigh of the age of hopelessness, the "beat" age, but with a new and seemingly positive difference. Each is longing for, and in some cases attempting, affirmation of meaning in human life, the cosmos, or both. But each is still afraid of the actual leap to the absolute that invites him. They are under a glass ceiling through which they can see the outer trees and the sky; but when they rise on impulsive wings they strike against rational skepticism, the world state of fear promulgated by their parents, their teachers, most of the press and their contemporaries. They fall back and record their truncated adventures in wistful poetry which, however, is not cynical, not aggressively negative, not at all reconciled to defeat. They are romantic in their hunger for universal truth unknown, but classical in their habit of reason and restraint. And, in spite of the "servile" emotions of mankind, they want to speak to an audience again. Two possibilities—the obvious ones—suggest themselves.

II. Romantic Revival

In the young poets' state of cautious aspiration it is tempting to read the beginnings of a full romantic revival as unqualified and seemingly eternal as was that of the twenties. We can find relevant hints in the long over-prophesied religious revival,

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and in the fact that in some corners the scientists are handing the ultimate problems back to the priests. The new age, in this view, will be a time for great poets, prophets on the watch for avatars and proclaiming new gospels. Semi-classicism will prove to have been an *entr'acte*, an exotic eddy unrelated to the main stream and bound to lapse into a footnote in the record, along with euphuism and spasmodicism.

Of the three possibilities suggested for the near future, this seems the least likely. A romantic poetry can flourish only in a society that mistrusts reason and looks for its values in transcendentials. Mankind is not going to return to such a condition until after a long and finally frustrated time of rational adventure—when experimental reason will have peeked into universes larger and more baffling than any it has yet postulated (possibly destroying most of mankind in the process)—and has recoiled from the awful prospect and admitted defeat.

III. Classical Revival

In view of the enormous landscape already intimated by contemporary physics and mathematics, it seems inevitable that the next integration, perhaps the first general culture of mankind, will be a rational one, a comprehensive humanism adjusted to all the advances into the macrocosm and the microcosm. And in such a culture the poetry will be classical, celebrating the latest scientific orthodoxy that provides the current skeleton of humanism. The recent semi-classicism will hold a dignified place in the record, not for its insignificant contribution to poetry, nor for its obscurantism and snobbery, but as a portent, a pioneer venture in classicism, a milepost in the transition out of neurotic romanticism into a literature of sanity.

But even this probable, classical culture and poetry are not going to arise and possess us suddenly. As a prerequisite for even a rationalistic orthodoxy, we must awake out of our twenty years' sleep into some kind of imaginative affirmation. For decades, we must aspire and grope through phases of blind and perhaps mistaken faith before we come in sight of a new temple of repose. That aspiration and groping are romantic functions,

and we must pass through an appreciable phase of quasi-romantic poetry before we reach the actual pause and turn of the great pendulum into a long classical swing. I say "quasi"-romantic because the aim will be only for limited objectives capable of confirmation by science and mathematics, whereas true romanticism, like mysticism, knows no calculable dimensions. The new ceiling will be vastly higher than the recent one of timidity, negation and esoteric retreat, but it will be a ceiling imposed by reason all the same.

The likely trend, then, more likely in poetry for several generations yet than that toward the atomization of the Lonely Crowd, will be toward a new general classicism, but with a quasi-romantic approach. The period of this approach will comprise the third and final phase of modern American poetry, itself a part of the final phase of the long reach of Anglo-American romanticism which began in the eighteenth century. From the beginning, the modern American current carried a smooth ribbon of classicism prophetic of the great change. In the homely romantic phase it consisted of the emphasis on conscious art, while all the other critical criteria remained romantic. In the semi-classical phase, only one of its four prominent contributions—which were remarkably uncongenial to each other—furthered the actual classical trend. The exotic obscurantism, typified by Stevens, *The Waste Land*, and Mr. Pound's *Cantos*, was no more than an insignificant and vanishing eddy, less relevant to the general flow than had been the imagism of the earlier phase. Then there was the respectable array of greatness, notably in Crane's *Brooklyn Bridge*, Mr. Eliot's *Quartets*, and much of Dr. Williams; but the first two are romantic poems and so part of the general flow, while Dr. Williams may be claimed by both sides, being able to pass for either a homely romantic or a kind of rough-neck classicist. The smattering of truly classical poetry, like Mr. Ransom's, was no more than normally exceptional for any period, like Ben Jonson in the high Elizabethan-Jacobean age or Collins in the first half of the eighteenth century. The significance of semi-classi-

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cism was in its prose, the fine classical professions of Mr. Eliot, Mr. Brooks, Mr. Ransom and many others; this profession, rather than the poetic performance, widened the classical element in the romantic flow and looked clearly to the emergence, at no very distant time, of a new classical age.

Meanwhile, we are entering the third phase of modern American poetry which I have called quasi-romantic, being romantic in emotionalism, motility, subjectivity and clarity, and yet limited by a material sky from the mystical consummation which is the aim of full romanticism. Presumably this phase will run until the classical ribbon on the romantic current widens to become the whole stream, a transmutation which will be a feature of the integration of the new scientific-humanist culture, perhaps in the last decade or two of the present century. Until then, the dominant, quasi-romantic poetry will continue the modern movement that got under way about 1910 with Robinson, Masters, Lindsay, Mr. Frost, Mr. Sandburg, Aiken, Mr. Jeffers, and all the rest, and comes down without fundamental change through Crane, Mr. Eliot and Dr. Williams. It represents the last out-pouring of the great romantic age when people dared aspire beyond rational caution toward probable defeat. This long age has produced one of the three or four finest bodies of poetry in the human record. The young poets of today will continue the record. And there is no reason to doubt that, as has happened before, the age will make its best contribution in its decline.

Leonard E. Nathan

IT LOOKS AS IF IT WERE JUST SLEEPING

I thought in the sweet stink of the funeral parlor,
My skull, though whittled out of lead, would split
And then I'd whine or squeak or bark
Because the corpse, glowing like wax fruit,
Was smothering in condolences of flowers,
An awful job they must have done in dark.

For refuge in the paralytic hush,
I traced my black sleeve to its severed end
Where knuckles bulged a cage of bone
That locked upon another's bird-warm hand,
My wife's contagious tenderness of flesh
Which hung upon a shaken skeleton.

And was alone, though in official mourning,
The chaplain read that little, fathering psalm
Where lambs may have their green escape
By dreaming, beyond all shadow, kingdom come.
But posted by the coffin's overt yawning,
Who could make me trust again in sleep?

ADVANCEMENT

There I come running from the wood, crowned green,
Or out of the hill, crazy-eyed yet with what
The illicit supernatural girl could mean,
Or stumbling from the vines, fanatic, hot.

God damn your eyes that frame me with a reason
As I grow real and middle-aged and wise!
Just west of here, they only know one season,
And you sit calmly totting up my lies.

Where I've just been they spit a rose of blood;
The muscat swells to touch until its skin
Explodes ripe juices and the wine's in flood:
I cleaved that amber essence like a fin.

All right, I'm humble, have a job at nine;
My glasses ground, I learn what looks can kill;
If you don't like my smile, I will resign;
I shall go nameless and responsible.

Wicked, contagious, foreign-feeling hand
That pockets its fist of shame, I'll hold you up
As an example to this sober land!
What cordial did you serve, my living cup?

Watch-out! I'm waiting with a well-conned pitch
To sell the self I've sacked in windy gray
Which walks and talks, pretending not to itch,
Is fatherly, and knows night follows day.

A READING OF HISTORY

The good guys lost the city first;
The bad guys never should have won that battle,
But did and turned the good guys out to starve
Or butchered them as they had butchered cattle.

The bad guys lost the city next;
The worse guys swarmed the walls from land and sea
Till heroes of evil parcelled out the widows.
O then how good the bad guys seemed to be!

The worse guys lost the city next;
Shaggy brutes slashed in from west and east
To drag them from their temples by the hair,
For worse guys were too gentle for this beast.

Yet who but this beast assembled later,
Three to a corner, stricken by whispered fact
That powers of darkness hovered off the coast
And nothing could prevent their being sacked.

The future plainly belongs to evil;
To good, the past; and for the present—well,
Good guys and bad guys mingle in the market;
Business was never better. Time will tell.

WIND-WATER

Lake is a wide motion; wind-water
All day longer than time,
Seven miles around noon
Over fishes' invisible music.
Wind-water, wind-water . . .
I've heard that, dreaming, before:
The way a girl would speak
Of swimming as trout swim—
Rainbow under surface scatter,
The way a girl would gaze
Sunk under broken glitter,
Her mouth, like a trout's mouth, working.
Wind-water, unnamable in sleep,
Or the nearly, nearly named
That widens the waker's eyes
To remember this slipping away
In a noon of round stillness
And the calm of swept water,
And lost clarity, blue below blue.
It is better like this: to have held
Nearly that undulant daughter
Than to have remembered nothing,
Gaping, when caught, like a trout,
Your round eye shallow,
Tugged from wind-water out.

Joan Swift

DAPHNE

The slippered air and the river were not enough:
To harbor in grass,
To flee him and sleep with her face profound in leaves
Was something of solace,
But she would be each branch. Abhorring flesh
And the sensual glade
Of his arms, she became her own green asylum.
She felt her blood
Transpose to sap. Up from her marvelous shoulders
Blossoms sprang.
And he who would capture was caught forever in her
Perpetual flowering.

FIRETHORN

A late sun through the window paints us orange.
Like pyracantha berries plump with frost,
We glisten on our gaudy winter branch,
Deep firethorn. A growing plant, our strange
Collusion has a botany. Where most
Gardens turn black with cold, we lunch
On summer verities, are evergreen
And blaze, though it is cruel. This spray of spines
Scratches the ungloved hand that touches where
We grow together, root to sod. I've seen
Bees at a pyracantha, round as moons
And taking what was sweetness, what was fire.

Miriam Goldman

The Lost

IT HAD TAKEN them over an hour to cover the distance each walked alone in ten minutes but they had just come out of school, and like convalescents were a little demoralized, not only by the day which was brilliantly frosty and calm but by the usual Friday-afternoon feeling of having stepped right into the week-end—she especially, so willing to be happy, her cheeks bloomed in the cold and she laughed at his jabs and insults until she staggered. Finally, however, she decided that the time had come to pay him back and with a yell of warning she swung her book-bag over her head, landing a blow that almost knocked him off his feet. To her surprise, he retaliated mildly: just reached out and took the back of her neck in his icy hand where he kept it protected from the cold by her long brown hair. Walking along, neither of them acknowledged their contact by the blink of an eye, but they were both so absorbed in feeling his hand enveloping warmth, they stopped talking—and when his grip involuntarily tightened, her heart swelled a little painfully and her eyes misted over.

Just ahead, their ways separated and still without a word they turned into the cemetery their road had been following all along. Its thick field-stone wall shut them in and gave them the privacy they wanted; even the sky could only be glimpsed in patches between the snowy boughs of the trees. Yet as soon as they walked through the black grilled gate standing slightly ajar, they moved apart, staring absently at the tombstones and the iron crosses of the veterans partially buried

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under the drifts. It was the quality of the stillness, as if heavily swaddled, that made them most uneasy and self-conscious; every outside sound seemed not so much far away as swallowed up before it reached them; they were forced to speak in whispers and to listen to each other breathe, so engrossed they started when a puff of snow fell softly from the branches of an evergreen close by.

Then smiling, to try to calm his stifled heart, he kissed her, slipping one hand beneath her sweater to the small of her back, while the other he held soft on her throat. Much the taller, he forced her in his awkwardness to stand uncomfortably, her head pressed so far back the blood sang in her ears while the silence oppressed her in its vise, like lead. There was his shirt; she stared at that, and, as empty of thought as of sensation, over his shoulder at a bland angel with meekly outstretched wings. But just as she was deciding to push him away, she felt his hand lying against her throat—would have liked nothing more than to stand, eternally delighted, exactly as she was—and broke away so she could breathe. She was ashamed then to look him in the face, but afraid, because she felt so cheated herself that she had hurt him by her woodenness, and circling his waist in both her arms, she hung against him for a moment sweetly and passively with all her weight, before running off. When she reached the gate, she turned to wave goodbye and saw him as sharply as if he stood transfixed by memory: dressed for the snow in a red plaid flannel shirt and sneakers, leaning back against a tree with his hands in his pockets, body still alert, his dark eyes bright with life and a smile that showed his teeth—what she thought of as his “pirate-smile.”

As soon as he was out of sight, however, she stopped thinking about him. Running, she watched her boots kicking up the snow and saw her book-bag knock against her knees but her eye recorded no detail of the landscape: houses, trees, parked cars, all washed past, while unaccountably her heart beat with an eagerness that grew more intense the nearer home she came, as if there were something tremendous waiting for her there. This excitement, an often repeated accompaniment to coming home

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—and the inevitable pang of disappointment when she got there, keener for being nameless, was familiar; and each time she pretended that like a little child she was walking a finely demarcated invisible line, which crossed inadvertently and without her even knowing when, would alter her life, one half falling away from the other like an apple cut in two. Standing in the sunshine outside her door, she hesitated. No sooner did she step inside than her fears and mysterious longing, both, vaporized, and she was handed back to sanity as always; but as always in crossing the threshold from the outer light to the dimness of the long narrow hallway, she somewhere sustained a fall.

She was greeted, as on every Friday, by the smell of freshly baked bread and found a plate of tiny golden buns still warm under a linen towel left out especially for her, their light yeast dough pitted and sweetened with plump raisins. Taking the whole plateful, she went upstairs and sat on the floor, her feast beside her. Sitting here in her room facing the window, she looked out onto a "Green" which the town flooded in the winter and where the neighborhood children came to skate. They were swarming now, the air pierced by their screams and shouts, yet above all the clamor the faint keen ring of blades could be heard striking delicately against the ice. Sitting as she was with her face close to the pane, her breathing steamed it over and as soon as she could no longer see the skaters distinctly, their cries too grew muted.

And then the figures swimming past as if through water, the faintly heard yet ringing voices, together with an overwhelming oppression and anxiety of heart, brought her back to another afternoon—years back, when sitting on the floor exactly where she was sitting now, she had watched out the window sobbing miserably—and, with a twinge of distaste, as if she had accidentally swallowed a whole fruit together with the pit, she remembered why: remembered walking home from school and pretending as she did so often that her brother who had died when he was five years old, before she was born, was waiting for her at home, and not a five-year-old child, moreover, but a

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fine grown-up young man. Oddly, she used to think that he carried a cane—as another child might imagine wings—and this single eccentricity betrayed his other-worldly citizenship to her as much as the unorthodox information she put into his mouth concerning heaven: in heaven, he said, roses grow in the gutter.

And as such dreams go, even for an eight-year-old, hers too were never altered by the smallest ritualistic word or gesture. . . . She looks up to him, he leans slightly down to her: subtle, far from simple motions, endlessly variable—wreaths of smoke. They walk, talk: one word, another—and flocks of words flutter and beat up between them. . . . Only that afternoon, her child's hold on the possible gave way and she pictured her mother's face radiant as an angel's, opening the door; and imagining, more, hearing her mother's greeting as a single cry of joy, she felt certain she was about to witness and take part in a miracle: that, plucked living from the grave by strangers, her brother had come home at last.

In fact, her mother did open the door for her just as in her zeal for "fresh air" her mother had opened every window downstairs to the frost; kissed and told to take her milk and cookies upstairs to her room "away from drafts," she had sat on the floor eating and drinking avidly, absorbed in watching the skaters, and sobbing from wretchedness and instinctive fright. Sitting in the same place now remembering that unhappiness, she was profoundly uneasy, not for having recalled a childhood episode which lay so far behind her that she could have assumed in all justice it had happened to someone else, but because she suspected that, walking home and not half an hour ago, she had been caught in the same old dream. At any rate, she felt as naggingly anxious as if she had somehow really sinned, and so was forced to consider that she had.

To defend herself, she cast about for someone else to blame, could not think of anyone, and blamed her mother. At once she felt easier, and recalled how they had sat together, her mother and her grandmother, reminiscing about their dead, while she had listened trying to make herself as unobtrusive

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as a piece of furniture, careful even how she breathed so as not to call attention to her presence. Indeed, the problem for her was not how to recreate their conversation but rather how to silence the reverberations; for, natural-born story-tellers, they had added their own emotional necessity for hyperbole to the inherited instinct of their race, so that their words, artless enough when spoken, assumed greater proportions when recalled, like those insignificant gestures whose shadows climbing on the walls and ceiling loom grotesque and grave.

Seufzer, Tränen, Kummer, Not . . . what fascinates children about such histories? To adults looking back, the past is a Pandora's box, but she believed, with all children, that it was chased in silver and in gold, and that like the future, it hid mysteries. And though the *dramatis personae* all arrived at the grave's end with only varying degrees of punctuality, they had set out on their journey by intoning the age-old magical formulas, so that every life was for her that contradiction in terms, a sad fairy-tale.

"I didn't want to leave him, something warned me not to, but I simply had to lie down," her mother said, deftly paring apples and reliving once again the death of her son. "I'd been watching him for three days and nights and couldn't hold my head up, not another second. Max came to sit beside the crib and we looked at him together for awhile and it even seemed to us he might be breathing just a little easier, my poor darling. But when I finally tore myself away and stretched myself out on the sofa, I couldn't sleep, couldn't even shut my eyes, just lay there staring at the rug, my heart as heavy as a stone. It may be, though, I fell asleep after all. It happens sometimes with your eyes open when you're all worn out like that. But however it was, suddenly a fire blazed up on the rug before my very eyes and I saw an old man creep through the door, like a crab, and with one horrible quick motion throw a bundle he was carrying right down into the flames. They told me later how I screamed. I don't remember—or getting up and running back, though I must have known I would never see him alive again after such a sight—and I'm not what anyone would call a

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superstitious woman. But God, help me—oh dear God, help us all! There sat poor Max, himself half dead, holding the little boy in his arms. Later, I got the scissors and cut his hair—one ringlet, where it curled just behind his ear. So fine. Like spun gold. . . . Really, how do we bear such things, I wonder? I turned my head away for just a second, you might say. But then, how long does it take? One heart-beat with a child—and the whole world stops—”

And her mother and her grandmother wept together, though her grandmother's eyes were always tearful no matter what she happened to be doing. Reading, or talking, or brooding over her darning, she dabbed at the tears as they rolled down her cheeks with a fresh-folded handkerchief, the corners of her eyes red from constant wiping. Yet at the slightest provocation, her glance flared with happiness and she clapped her hands together for joy like a little child. “Hopf-hopf,” she clapped and sometimes did a stately turn.

“Lost!” she said of her parents, brothers, sisters, cousins, husband, and her youngest son. “Lost,” she repeated, automatically wiping her eyes. And though it was her last-born she lamented most passionately, she maintained she mourned them all in mourning him. Not yet of age, he had run away to enlist and had fallen in the very last months of the War. Who could tell, if only he had waited to be called? And defiantly, with the habitual tightening of her lips, she would add that, yes, she knew how wrong it was, expressly forbidden in fact, to dwell as she did on the dead. But how could she help nourishing his memory? What mightn't he have made life yield to him, she demanded, with his beauty and his fire? And with a rapid glance, she placed the last photograph she had of him down on the kitchen table and letting her darning drop into her lap, looked around her bitterly, a guest for life in her son-in-law's house; and slowly, palms out, she raised both hands above her head like a prophetess warding off disasters she herself had foretold in vain!

And from the time that she had been a little girl and was first shown his picture, she had imagined that her brother

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looked like this photograph of her uncle: slim-waisted in a gray uniform with a velvet collar and epaulets, the hilt of his saber in the crook of his arm; eyes beneath the slightly tapering and visored *kepi*, deep-set and serious in a light open face; familiar facial bone structure with its high cheekbones and cleft chin, and a mouth both fine and long that seemed because of the curve of its full lower lip to be smiling.

One day she had taken this photograph to school with her and was taunted by one of the children for showing them a picture of the enemy. And that night when her father came home, she asked him about it. "Is it possible we're the enemy?"

"No," he answered, letting her sit on his lap even though he was eating his supper. "Only your mother and your grandmother there are the enemy," he added slyly, and laughed. As for the two of them, why, they were just plain good Americans, she needn't worry her head about that. "But," he continued, warming to his subject and putting a choice morsel of meat into her mouth with his fork, "in this life of ours, nothing stays the same for very long no matter how much we want it to. And that handsome young uncle of yours, whose picture you keep on studying all the time, if he was still alive and over in Austria today, he wouldn't be the enemy either—only the hunted."

So even that then was nothing for her to worry about.

That we can count on keeping nothing in this life, he said, that was the terrible lesson she would have to learn, though he hoped that he was here to see that she learned it as late as possible. "But that's how it is and nothing changes it—not tearing of hair or weeping and wailing," he concluded, taking a long drink of ale.

"Did you ever in all your life listen to such nonsense?" her mother retorted, furious. "A fine philosophy to stuff into the head of a young and innocent child."

"Gypsy!" accused the grandmother, taking care, however, to avoid her son-in-law's dangerous glance.

"Gypsy!" she echoed to herself, enchanted, and snuggling more comfortably into her father's lap prepared to begin a series of adventures that would wind through many days.

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"In love with the sound of his own voice department, that's all it amounts to," said her mother to her grandmother. "But that's one thing we can be sure will never change, at least not in our life-time anyway."

But her father continued talking as if there had been no interruption. What a terrible lack in a human being, he said, not to have a sense of humor. Not one single grain! Imagine! But all that was beside the point. Time itself would be his judge, he went on, and some day, looking back on this whole argument, she would decide for herself which of them was in the right. She would find out for herself—much as he would want it otherwise—that what we love most either disappears or changes, which after all comes down to the same thing. An old old story. Very old. Why then are some people always so afraid to look the truth straight in the face?

But by now, caught in a quarrel whose bitterness overwhelmed her all the more for being obscure, she sullenly refused to sit with her father and left the table; and she remembered that she had resolved not to listen to any of them. Sitting on the floor now, still remembering, she knew that she longed for the day when she could forget and be free of them all—including her brother-uncle, gentle, unsubstantial ghost, so long the companion of her childhood. She attempted then earnestly to picture the face of the real boy who had kissed her, but he remained featureless as if under a curse, while the uncle she had never seen and long since dust, rose up living before her.

And she knew then that her father had been wrong: her own lost and dead—see how they remained with her as if she were their graveyard and their caretaker.

Would that ever change?

And actually unbalanced physically by the perception of so much added weight, she threw herself down on her back and wept. Crying, she contemplated the cracks in the ceiling—saw a bear, a lamb, a sail; and licking her tears, she was comforted a little—when her door was flung open and her mother ran in wearing her hat and coat and carrying a huge bag of groceries in her arms. "What is it?" she cried in panic. "What happened

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now to make you cry this way? No, tell me, I insist!" she said, trying ineffectually to block the door, then following her down the stairs. "Don't slam it," she called as the house shook.

Outside, it was dusk and most of the skaters had gone home. Only, as if in answer to her need, she saw him, still dressed in his plaid shirt but with a woolen cap pulled low over his forehead and his ears. Head thrust forward, knees bent, hands crossed loosely over his back, he seemed in his intensity to be racing against himself, whipping around without slackening his speed by a hair's breadth, adroitly slipping in and out among the other skaters. Standing between two pines, which seemed, they were so deeply green and luxuriantly branched, to be themselves the source of the spreading darkness, she watched him without being seen. As evening came down, the scored ice brightened, gleamed for a space intensely white in the last fading light, and then all at once she could no longer really see him. But for a while longer she heard him, the sound of his blades cutting over the ice, and imagined how they would skate together another day, she facing him, propelled by him backwards. When her reverie ended, she realized that he had gone without her marking the time and that meanwhile too it had begun to snow again, the flakes sifting steadily and falling on the ground and on the branches of the trees with the faintest almost imperceptible hiss, like sparks sinking down into the ashes.

"Eeeee-aaaaa!" her mother's voice, drifting far out, held a note that was poignantly sweet and clear, and listening to that youthful lingering call, she ran home filled with tenderness, because she believed that as long as her mother's voice, which was her essence, remained untouched by age, she herself would always be forgiven.

That night, in her first deep sleep, she dreamed about the war, the action and the landscape unreeling itself before her, as she had recently seen it in the movies. Holding a little boy by the hand, she fled with a stream of refugees along a sightless littered road. Though she never saw the child's face, she knew very well who it was she held: his hand insinuated itself in hers

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with such a fragile boneless clinging. Then, as if in turning two pages had been turned together, she watched an airplane hang silver and motionless above her head—zoom down, twist off, and zoom straight down on her again, while she stood deserted, incapable of taking the smallest step aside to save herself. She saw the pilot clearly, but when she called to him, he bared his teeth in a grin, waved his sword so that she caught the glint of its steel in the sun, and flew away—and she half awoke, retaining little of her dream but its vague menace and a dumb unreasoning rapture of all her senses; as if threatened, her body stubbornly remembered its caress, fleeting and pervasive as a mist. And the remainder of the night she slept a strange ecstatic sleep between dreaming and waking and memory and longing, at the same time aware of the real world around her. Sleeping and warm in her sheets, conscious of her breathing and of her drowned and tenuous stirring, she heard the wind drive the snow and listened to the icy flakes knock against the window pane; and though she slept with the blankets pulled up over her head, like an owl intent on the night, a sense in her alert and wide awake watched the hours paling.

It was late in the morning when she woke, knowing by the flood of light that it had stopped snowing at last, as well as by the peculiarly muffled silence, so pervasive that she heard the delicate ticking of her watch. Dazzled, she groped for her slippers without opening her eyes and sitting on the edge of the bed with her head bent and the morning sun on her back, she drowsed a little longer, storing honey.

Charles Farber

THE RUNNING PEDDLER

My father ran on the chirring summer roads
crying dry goods cheap, cheap!
slipping on the sly, fired ice or speeding
before wind-arrowed leaves, until
he lay in hospital,

John the Baptist's head
on a white salver, and whispered "Kiss
me zundele," but I turned away.
His breath was rank and outside the trees
mixed blue and blossoms, bird shadows
clogged the ground, the bodyless, mute sun
gazed deeply. . . .

and he was dead,
his hand laid lightly on mine
—run all that way
to catch a fool.

Don Geiger

CONSOLING MEDITATIONS ON THE GREAT MAJORITY (II): Fathers

I saw my father rolled away
in a casket too expensive for my means
(I lived in another town, and somebody else
placed the rush order, but of course I agreed,
so much is our love victim of our fears
that somehow we will have made the dead uncomfortable).
His hair had been darkened nicely and,
plumped out to perfection with embalming fluid,
he made, as the funeral parlor hostess said,
the best prepared one that month.
The men from the office walked up quietly,
stopped, looked, and walked back quietly to shake my hand.
I do not think they meant to congratulate me, precisely,
but it was the only way remaining for them
to show their genuine appreciation of my father.
Two or three of them said they would have known me anywhere,
that I looked just like him,
though I do not know if they meant before or after.
A pastor, seemingly somewhat bewildered
by his own presence in the mortuary chapel,
was nevertheless kindly and general,
as one ought to be in speaking of strangers.
He summarized matters swiftly,
giving a nice account of death's importance to us all,
and stumbling only once in need of some fact relevant
to tying my father's particular case into basic principles.

Challenged by the occasion, he could not resist
reaching for one rapidly disappearing high note,
but at the graveside he glanced at me uneasily,
as if to wonder if I knew that, as my father taught me,
since only the solitary heart can know its reasons
for the random wailing, the gnashing, the spitting of fingernails,
these miseries, like visions, are most profitable when private.
And then a last long look at the flowers, the broken earth,
while, inevitably, it began to rain.

At last it was finished.

I heard the wet tires roll back like paper horns.

Refusing someone's invitation,

I dined alone and late at my hotel,

to enjoy my rage and fear without interruption.

Feeding relentlessly, I tried to dispel

the vision of my father lying alone in the dark,

a mountain of menus, welcoming strangers.

I told myself that for him it would be but an episode

in a lifetime of fresh starts from the prostrate position.

I told myself how much he would have enjoyed

our spirited attempts to give him a good send-off.

I told myself that never had he shown such composure in a
tight place.

I told myself to go ahead and tell myself

what a ruinous old mess he had been for twenty years.

I told myself just as much of a conversation

as I could have without my father there to join in.

The next day, I once more shook hands

all the way around, paid everybody off,

and then, as we had done so many times together,

too many times together, too infrequently together,

my father and I moved off together,

shaking the dust of one more friendly town.

Edwin Honig

Calderón's Strange Mercy Play

THE SPANISH reputation for pride—fierce, glorious, and absurd—goes back at least as far as the Cid. Starting as an obscure soldier-squire, the epic hero is tricked and banished by powerful enemies among the nobility, vengefully returns, becomes a rich conqueror, sees his enemies punished, and his daughters married to kings. This type of Christian warrior, whose ideals are rooted in a mixed heritage of Visigothic and Moorish honor, later conquers the New World, spreading his peculiarly anachronistic version of militant Catholicism, at once zealously mystical and egregiously imperialistic. When we come upon him again in *Don Quixote*, with all his ideals chastened by defeat, his persistent absurdity wrings a momentous Pyrrhic victory from his misadventures. Paradoxically in this way he revives the standard of Spanish pride so successfully that he becomes a sort of secular saint—the counterpart to the only other Spanish saint whose *order* endures, Ignatius Loyola.

In Spanish Golden Age drama something else happens to heroic pride. Methodized and internalized, it becomes the conscientious resource of heroes who feel themselves estranged from society yet act strictly according to its unwritten, vengeful code of honor. The honor code lends itself to the intolerably burdened conscience, the embattled condition of outraged pride, a state of personal fear mirroring society's fear of contamination and the assault against its autocratic rule. The burdened conscience resorts to a desperate ultrarational dialectic, a kind of private Holy Inquisition (viz. the stocktaking soliloquies and

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dialogues in the honor plays), a legalistic tourney justifying the precise foul means involved in regaining lost personal honor. The medicine of hypocrisy is often used to bring about the catharsis, the shedding of the burden in murder, whereby the social law is preserved and the individual is sacrificed. Even where an alternative is offered in a series of frenzied aggressive acts justified by religious devotion and supernatural mercy, the redeeming action seems almost as hypocritical, self-defensive, and criminally directed as the vengeance principle it is meant to combat. The hero engaged in either cause is similarly induced by disguised sexual passion to perform acts of violence and sadism as grim as the traditional *auto da fé*.

The honor play became a convention before Calderón, mainly because it gave the dramatist a sure-fire formula to capture popular audiences. In a dramatic handbook of the period, Lope de Vega wrote, "Incidents concerning honor are preferable because they move all people forcefully." When as a new playwright in the 1620's Calderón picked up the formula, he made it serve unexpected ends. In his plays honor is more than a thematic convenience or an exemplification of a code; it becomes the chief implement of design, shaping, infusing with life and dramatic necessity the very substance of his plays. The reason for this is that Calderón, more than any other dramatist of his time, is temperamentally disposed to view the world and his art allegorically. His secular plays show a more and more symbolic orientation in their typological use of character and situation, leading toward the form of the *auto*, the sacramental morality, with which he was almost exclusively concerned in the last thirty years of his career.

To the allegorist the world is a permanent battleground for the strategic maneuvers of body and soul, best typified in the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius, the early Spanish-Latin poet. The literary allegorist gives first importance to his theme, exploiting it with the whole armory of his artistic contrivances until it becomes inextricable from the work itself. Calderón turned the honor code into a complex dramaturgical machine entirely directed to serving as an allegorical purveyor of his theme. To

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anyone aware of the multiple effects, the condensations of meaning, and the urgent tone of anxiety which such a form produces, the language and craftsmanship of Calderón's plays immediately appear to be full of allegorical devices. One cannot in any case disregard the devices, for they are used with uncommon persistence. And when such uses are probed they reveal something wholly different from the chilling artifices, monstrous rhetoric, and casuistic apology they are often taken for. They point to a triumph of sensibility over severely limited materials and the effects of a relentless, largely forbidding, ideology. It is only when these matters are mistakenly viewed by realistic criteria that Calderón's work collapses into absurdity.

In Calderón's definitive honor play, *Secret Vengeance for Secret Insult* (1635), honor's surrogate is the king and its instrument is Don Lope, "membered to the body" of the state. For the most part, the dramatic action is significantly internalized through Lope's soliloquies. The legalistic development of the theme is worked out appropriately in secret, through definitions of his state of mind, implemented by his conscientious strategy. Symbolic counterparts to this action appear in the critically realistic speeches of his servant Manrique, in the recurrent elemental symbolism throughout the play, and through the various inset actions and witnessings which other characters introduce. Dramatically we are aware of a constant balancing and symmetry of processes; the play's highly schematized structure, based on the allegorical treatment of theme, makes for sharp but discrete doubling effects, like sounds counterposed to echoes and images counterposed to mirrored reflections.

In *Devotion to the Cross* (1633),* where the honor theme is eclipsed by an incest situation and transcended by supernatural mercy, there is a blurring of dramatic action, an impression of structural imbalance and of a thematic resolution which shocks belief. One reason for this difference between the plays is

* All translations from *Devotion to the Cross* are from *Calderón: Four Plays* (New York: Hill and Wang, Inc., 1961), edited, with an introduction, by Edwin Honig. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Calderón's *Strange Mercy Play*

that the action of thought in *Devotion* is largely externalized; there is no nice thematic complementariness set up between auxiliary characters and the principal agents. And because the allegory is revealed through what the main characters do, the course of action must be taken as a continuous analogue to the archetypal situation of man's fall and redemption. Though the play is structurally ragged and esthetically less satisfying than *Secret Vengeance*, it is more moving. Like *Hamlet* or *Doctor Faustus* the play's dramaturgic failure is somehow overcome by its resonant tone of outrage and the depths of implication at its center. The gross melodrama enforces a pathetic, and strategically delayed, action of self-realization, and this is achieved by a flouting of the very credibility the play insists upon in order to make its point.

For us the play is problematic; for Calderón's contemporaries it was little more than a religious thriller, a lesson in heavenly clemency steeped in blood and spiced with incest. But our problem with it is not how to swallow the melodrama with its religious message in one gulp, which is what troubled nineteenth-century critics of the play. For Albert Camus, who adapted *Devotion* in French, neither the dramatic tenor nor the morality was anachronistic when he remarked:

Grace transfiguring the worst of criminals, goodness awakened by excessive evil are for us, believers and nonbelievers alike, familiar themes. But it was three centuries before Bernanos that Calderón in the *Devotion* provocatively illustrated the statement that "Grace is everything," which still tempts the modern conscience in answer to the nonbeliever's "Nothing is just."

To go further: the larger problem of belief depends upon how we understand the implications of honor and incest in the play. What, we may ask, has honor to do with incest and, if there is a real connection, does this account for the resonances we feel in the play as well as the shock of poetic justice underlying the thaumaturgic actions at the end? Unless we frame the problem this way we must stop with a literal reading of the play, and a literal reading of *Devotion* leads into a tangle of absurdities.

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Lisardo has challenged his friend Eusebio to a duel for daring to court Julia, Lisardo's sister, without asking permission of Curcio, their father. Eusebio, as Lisardo tells him, would not qualify as her suitor anyway since he is presumably not of noble blood. So Lisardo must now redress the blight on the family honor brought about by Eusebio's rash suit, and Julia must be made to end her days in a convent. Eusebio tells Lisardo the story of his strange birth at the foot of a cross and the charmed life he has led; then, vowing to have Julia at any price, he mortally wounds his antagonist. But in answer to the dying Lisardo's plea to be shriven, Eusebio carries him off to a monastery. Following this, Eusebio enters Curcio's house secretly, speaks with Julia, hides when her father appears and, after the body of Lisardo is brought in and Curcio leaves, Eusebio emerges and carries on an impassioned dialogue with her over Lisardo's corpse; then at Julia's bidding he escapes, promising never to see her again.

In Act Two Eusebio is a refugee from justice and the leader of a band of highwaymen, notorious for their crimes in the mountain passes and nearby villages. Eusebio spares the life of a traveling priest, Alberto, and exacts a promise from him to be shriven before dying. Next, he breaks into Julia's convent, where he is about to rape her when he discovers she bears the same sign of the cross on her breast which he bears on his. He will have nothing to do with her now, and escapes. She leaves the convent to search for him, although he does not know this. Meanwhile Curcio, directed by the law to capture Eusebio dead or alive, leads a group of peasants and soldiers through the mountain. There he reveals the story, partly hinted at in the first act, of his mistrust and jealousy of his wife Rosmira. We learn of the ruse by which he brought her to the mountains when she was pregnant, and of his attempt to kill her there. We also learn that he had left Rosmira for dead at the foot of the cross, where she had given birth to twins; on returning home he found her, miraculously transported there, with the infant Julia, the other child having been lost.

In Act Three Julia, disguised as a man, is captured and

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brought before Eusebio. Left alone with him, she first attempts to kill him, then is persuaded to tell her story, which turns out to be a fantastic tale of multiple murders she has committed since leaving the convent. She is interrupted by the report of Curcio's arrival. When Eusebio and Curcio meet both are momentarily immobilized by a feeling of mutual sympathy. They fight briefly without swords and are interrupted by Curcio's men, who chase Eusebio; they slash at him until he topples from the cliff and falls dying at the foot of the same cross where he was born. Discovered there by Curcio, he is acknowledged as a long-lost son, Julia's twin, and dies. Meanwhile the approach of Alberto, the priest, causes the dead Eusebio to revive and call out. The priest confesses him and Eusebio gives up the ghost in a scene witnessed by Curcio and his group, as well as the disguised Julia and the highwaymen. Revealing herself now, Julia publicly confesses her crimes, but when her father advances to strike her, she reaches for the cross, which ascends heavenward and bears her away with the dead Eusebio.

Most critics have been annoyed by the play's hypocrisy, its crude religious propaganda, its perverse morality which pardons the devout but unsympathetic criminal. Among the few contrary opinions are William Entwistle's view of the play as "a representable idea" and A. A. Parker's insistence that it be read in terms of the unity of its theme. Actually, only when the play is read allegorically does it become intelligible despite its strange immorality.

Through Eusebio, its chief character, *Devotion* represents the figurative fall and redemption of mankind. As a figure for the fallen Adam, Eusebio is redeemed by the Cross ("tree divine"), which bears him heavenward, and thus fulfills his "secret cause"—a prefiguration, as Adam in the Bible prefigures Christ. At infancy he is abandoned (assumed to be "lost") at the foot of the cross where, we learn later, his mother fell under the hand of his jealous father. Having no identity, Eusebio takes the cross as a totemic object which corresponds to the talisman etched on his breast like a birthmark. This makes him a candidate for salvation, as it does Julia his twin, who is similarly

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marked. As Eve may be said to have been Adam's twin, and as both were victims of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so Eusebio and Julia share a common destiny, part of which is to be restored through grace by the Cross, the tree of eternal life. The implication of incest, which underlies the act of original sin in Genesis, is here metaphysically, if not sacramentally, material to Calderón's allegory. The reason for this is that Eusebio must learn who he is, which he can do only by discovering and rejoining Julia, his other half. But to do so he must relive symbolically the primal scene in the garden, whose analogue in the play is the convent where Julia, as "the bride of Christ," is immured.

Another analogue suggested here is that of the body and the soul, the twin or complementary entities. The soul (Eusebio) seeks to be restored to the body (Julia) from which it has been separated. When Eusebio finds Julia in the convent and is about to re-enact the primal deed, he dimly senses in her talismanic sign some heavenly purpose linking her to his secret cause. This foreboding makes him reject her, much as a figure of the new Adam, forewarned of his cause, would reject the old sexual crime—incest, original sin. Yet he must suffer Adam's fall literally as well as symbolically; and this occurs when Eusebio falls from the ladder by the convent wall. In her turn Julia, the fallen body and rejected spouse, is separated by means of the same wall and ladder from re-entering the garden-convent. In ignorance of her destiny, she follows Eusebio and tries to destroy him. The crimes she commits on the way are, like Eusebio's earlier crimes, committed in blind outrage at having been separated from her other half.

In the worldly terms represented by the shepherds, Eusebio's and Julia's cause is criminally absurd. But since at the play's end, worldly discretion and justice are both foiled by the twins' heavenly ascension, it seems clear that it is the spiritual significance of the action, symbolically represented, which interested Calderón.

A Christian hero, Eusebio, like the heroes of all myths, is at the start unaware of his origin, though supremely conscious of

Calderón's Strange Mercy Play

some unrevealed fate he has been designated to fulfill. While still ignorant of when and how his fate will be revealed, and because he cannot know if his duel with Lisardo will end disastrously, he tells the story of his life, ticking off each miraculous episode as if to indicate his triumphs over merely earth-bound, mortal forces. To Lisardo's grim reminder of Eusebio's inferior blood, Eusebio retorts, "Inherited nobility / is not superior to / nobility that's been acquired." He can say this because he knows he has a patent to act in ways that transcend a nobleman's prerogatives; his "escutcheon" is "inherited from this Cross." He has been tested and has triumphed before; he will triumph again: in the wilderness of the mountain, in the garden-convent, and finally—to his eternal reward when he dies—at the foot of the same cross where he was born. To that cross he is to speak later as Adam might have spoken to God, remembering the paradise tree: "Forgive me for the injury / of that first crime against you." And again like an Adam with foreknowledge of his sin, he will say, "I do not blame / my father for denying me / a cradle. He must have sensed / the evil that was in me." Eusebio's invocation to the cross at the end is shot through with transfigured consciousness:

Oh Tree, where Heaven chose to hang
the one true fruit to ransom man
for his first forbidden mouthful!
Oh flower of paradise regained!
Rainbow light that spanned the Flood
and thus pledged peace to all mankind!
Oh fruitful vine; the harp of yet
another David; and the tablets
of another Moses:
Here I am, a sinner seeking grace.

Eusebio has been transformed from the human agent of his crimes into a symbolic force voicing the redemptive hope of all mankind. In this way he defeats the exactions of earthly penalties, and incidentally overcomes the harsh, tyrannical laws of honor represented by Curcio, the father who survives his wife and all his children.

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Indeed, what about the honor theme which is so abruptly transcended at the end of the play by divine law? The question of honor not only bulks large throughout the play but is also curiously altered in the light of Eusebio's cause. Further inquiry tells us something about the unconscious motivations supporting the honor code as shown in the implicit incest-relationship vividly darting forth from the root situation of the play. For as they affect human motives, the impulsions and repulsions of the characters, the conventions of honor relate to certain basic though unspecified taboos concerning the sexual assault of male against female in the same family. But we must begin with the first recorded sexual relationship, in Genesis, and then go on to the society represented in Calderón's plays.

In effect the Genesis story demonstrates an archetypal incest situation inherent in man's disobedience, his fall from God's grace, and his knowledge of good and evil. Taken as a paradigm for man's earthly condition, the sexual crime called original sin derives from a transgression against divine command, a transgression that brings with it the knowledge of guilt. Instigated by Eve, man rebels against a paternal authority, Jehovah, who punishes her accordingly: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." Later in Genesis (V, 2), one finds, "Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created." The creation of man and woman out of one body, the division of interests indicated between male and female, the transgression against authority, the sorrow of sex and childbearing, and the dominance of Adam over Eve are set down as almost simultaneous events and become an archetypal situation.*

* I have summarized elsewhere J. J. Bachofen's view of such a situation: "Archetypal situations of this sort apparently involve the dynamic interplay of two broad, antagonistic principles. One might say the conflict between these principles is nearly pervasive enough to affect every emotion and every move a person makes or thinks of making. Together these principles engender the dichotomies of art evolving out of authoritarian religion, and relate to the biases of artistic expression we call classical or romantic, rational or enthusiastic.

Calderón's *Strange Mercy Play*

It may be assumed, then, that Eve's transgression is congenital and innate: as woman, she will always rebel against the authoritarian principles. Eve, "the mother of all living," will be a divisive force in fallen society, just as she was in paradise. One way to counteract her innate rebelliousness is to idealize her, as the Middle Ages did: first, symbolically, by elevating the Virgin Mary as an object of worship; secondly, by lodging the image of woman as a venerated but scarcely attainable love object in the tradition of courtly love. Another way is to bind her, as the prize and victim of transgression, to a code of honor—a role descending from the courtly tradition and modified by the needs of an authoritarian society, typical of seventeenth-century Spain.

The peculiarly tight, claustrophobic condition of the honor code appears to derive from an already tense, anxiety-ridden view, featured in myth and religion, of woman's unreconciled position between transgressor and idol. In addition, this view is overlaid by the historical and social exigencies of an imperial Spain warring against Protestantism as it had for centuries warred against Islam. In this struggle the impossible myth of Spanish Christian purity and pure-blooded (*castizo*) descent would have to be sustained against the millennial evidence of intermarriage with Berbers, Moslems and Jews, not to mention cultural assimilation with other peoples of Western and Mediterranean Europe, going back to the early Phoenicians. The avowal that one is an "old Christian Catholic," repeated so often in Renaissance Spanish literature, becomes a self-defensive cry; vainglorious and perversely aggressive, it reminds one of Nazi Germany's self-conscious aryanism. And so where the invasion of one's honor is sexually directed, an attack on one's

One principle is the dominance of woman and the natural virtues imputed to her, which are culturally shaped into the matriarchal ideals of love, equality, peace, mercy, fecundity, the reassuring periodicity of nature, human freedom, brotherhood, and the world as an earthly paradise. In opposition is the powerful and now triumphant principle of male authority, which encompasses all the virtues of civilized life: law, conscience, justice, military heroism; the concepts of hierarchy, primogeniture, and individualism; and the material conquest over nature." (*Dark Conceit: the Making of Allegory* [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1959], p. 35.)

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personal pure-bloodedness, with social and religious implications, is also immediately assumed.

In the autocratic society of Calderón's plays, every family seems to be a Spain-in-little seeking to preserve itself against the real or imagined, but always chronic, invasions of lawless forces from the outside. That the laws of honor are inhuman and tyrannical—a protest constantly being voiced by Calderón's heroes—does not interfere with their being fulfilled. And as they are being fulfilled, often in strictest secrecy, we are struck by the incredible, tragic strength of will involved in acting upon an impossible ideal according to an impossible sense of justice.

The fear of incest and the fear of sexual assault become one and the same thing; particularly notable in *Devotion to the Cross*, the same fear is evident in most of Calderón's honor plays. In addition, the incest barrier is complemented by the religious barrier between different faiths as well as by the social barrier between classes; and behind such barriers lurks the constant fear of contamination. Life under these circumstances is seen as warfare, catastrophe, and fatality, in which the vaguest hint of misdemeanor is as culpable as any number of overt murders. Where authoritarian justice rules, whether theocratic or monarchic, to think or to be tempted as a human being (the hero in *Secret Vengeance* exclaims, "How is it one thinks or speaks at all?") is as dangerous as to put one's thoughts and temptations into action. What makes the honor code so strange to us is that it is a reduction (often to absurdity) of an imperialistic legal structure, from its embodiment in ecclesiastical and state authority to an individual psychological problem, without any mitigation of its impersonal emphasis. What would justify legal punishment by state or church—the impersonal need to preserve the community against assaults by criminal or heretic—becomes bizarre when voiced as a rationale by human beings following the letter of the honor code. They act as though they had set some gigantic, superhuman machine in motion, which is just what they have done. What makes for further bizarreness is the unconscious irony with which they speak in rationalizing their human pride as the cause of justice while being ignorant that they themselves are part of the machine and that their

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voice is actually the voice of the machine. The pride they boast of concerns the acts and strategies of will—their skill, their cunning; what they do not know is that such pride is simply the fuel that makes the honor machine run. Human pride, then, frequently becomes a sign not of personal satisfaction but of the impersonal glorification of the legal structure; and the act which the human agents engineer in its name becomes a personal *auto da fé*, a self-punishing sacrifice in the name of a super-personal faith.

That this makes for dramatic irony in Calderón's plays may be seen in the various views, ranging from satiric to sacramental, with which the central character's situation is regarded by other characters as well as the opposing views he has of it himself. The dramatic irony is further evident in the rapid glimpse we get of the hero's fate at the end of the play, where he appears at best a Pyrrhic victor, exhausted, wrung out by the machine, and hardly distinguishable from his victim. Dramatic irony is highly schematized in Calderón's plays, being part of, if not indeed the instrument for creating, a larger moral irony. It is interesting to see how the ironic form shapes the honor-bound figure of Curcio in *Devotion*.

An aspect of the moral irony made explicit here is that the avenger complains against the tyrannical laws of honor, though they are the only laws he can follow in exacting his revenge. But an even more pronounced irony is that the object of Curcio's revenge, Eusebio, is redeemed at the end by a higher law than that of honor, so that the matter is literally taken out of Curcio's hands. Since the action of the play is allegorical, we can no more read this final turn of events realistically than we can any other part of the play. The literal meaning is apparent: Curcio is not avenged, and in not being avenged, the course of honor which he has pursued throughout is defeated. How then are we to take his defeat and, by clear analogy, since he is its implement, the defeat of honor? The obvious answer is that honor has been superseded by a miracle; the intervention of divine powers indicates that Eusebio is not to be punished, but having entered into a state of grace is, on the contrary, given his heavenly reward along with Julia. Curcio's last speech—his final remarks

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to the audience are simply conventional and do not count—is clearly a revenger's furious threat addressed to Julia, an intended victim: "I shall kill you with my own two hands, / and have you die as violently / as you have lived." She pleads to the Cross, and as Curcio "is about to strike her," embraces it and so is lifted heavenward with Eusebio. Curcio could not have been more plainly foiled, and to say that his vengeance, including his authority for seeking it, has been superseded by divine intervention, does not seem a full or satisfactory answer. For apparently Curcio was mistaken—just as badly mistaken here, when about to kill his daughter, as he was earlier when striking at his innocent wife, who was similarly rescued by the Cross. The deeper moral irony, then, is that the laws of honor, so assiduously upheld by Curcio, are indeed defeated and their justification, as enacted by their avenger here, is shown to be reprehensible on the highest possible authority.

Is honor here defeated or merely superseded? To seek a fuller answer to the question, one must rephrase it to accord with Curcio's allegorical role in the play. In what way is Curcio, the surrogate of honor and an omnipotent figure in the community, responsible for the fate which his family suffers? First, and most generally, it is evident that by accusing his wife of infidelity and seeking to kill her on admittedly groundless evidence, Curcio touches off a series of actions which ends with the death of his three children and his wife. Secondly, it is made clear that Curcio is temperamentally handicapped: he is prodigal, rash, desperate, and overweeningly proud. Some of these attributes are inherited and reinforced to his own detriment by his own children, in a way suggestive of King Lear. Lisardo's brief appearance before he is killed by Eusebio seems at least partly intended to characterize his father:

My father

was a profligate who rapidly
consumed the great estate
his family had left him.
In so doing, he was heedless
of the straitened circumstances

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to which his children were reduced.

And yet, although necessity

may beggar one's nobility,

it does not lessen in the least

the obligations one is born with.

Following his inherited obligation, Lisardo must challenge Eusebio for lacking the noble qualifications to court his sister Julia. Lisardo's pronouncement concerning his sister, considering it is addressed to her lover who is also his friend, seems precipitous and mechanical, as though echoing a catechism learnt from his father:

An impoverished gentleman
who finds his fortune does not meet

the requirements of his rank

must see to it his maiden daughter,

rather than pollute his blood

by marriage, is taken off

in safety to a convent.

In all this, poverty's the culprit.

Accordingly, tomorrow, my sister

Julia will quickly take the veil,

whether she wishes to or not.

Julia's subsequent report confirms the fact of her brother's anxious nature. Lisardo's face pales, drained by suspicion; he prevaricates—"snatched the key / impulsively, and angrily / unlocked the drawer," to discover the evidence of Eusebio's courtship; then, "without a single word, oh God! / he rushed out to find my father. / Then inside his room behind locked doors, / the two of them spoke loud and long— / to seal my fate..." Lisardo is hardly distinguished from his father, whose purpose he is serving before he is killed. Later, when Julia questions Curcio's decision to put her into a convent, his voice seems simply a magnification of Lisardo's catechism. "Right or wrong, my will / is all you need to know." "My decision will suffice, and that / has been resolved. The matter's closed." "Rebel, hold your tongue! Are you mad? / I'll twist your braids around your neck, / or else I'll rip that tongue of yours /

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out of your mouth with my own hands / before it cuts me to the quick again." Curcio immediately identifies Julia's rebellion with her dead mother's, now impulsively finding "proof" where later he admits no evidence existed:

So at last I have the proof
of what I long suspected:
that your mother was dishonorable,
a woman who deceived me.
So you attack your father's honor,
whose luster, birth, nobility
the sun itself can never equal
with all its radiance and light.

It is apparent from this moment on that Curcio, hiding his defects behind the shield of honor, is steering a course which must victimize Julia as surely as he has victimized his elder son Lisardo and his wife Rosmira. Though victimized as well, Eusebio listens to a higher law in his worship of the Cross. It would be possible to show similarly that Curcio's defects of despair, pride, and simple-minded credulity also influence the course of events. And though the exemplification of such personal defects would suffice to support the action in realistic terms, this is not what we get in *Devotion to the Cross*. What we get instead is allegorical action, action by analogy, by symbolic counterpart. By such action Curcio figures dominantly as a type of vengeful Jahveh, the thunder god in Genesis, the creator and punisher of the incestuous pair who exceeded the commandment and attained to a knowledge of good and evil—as in their separate ways Eusebio and Julia do. In the Bible the vengeful God is superseded by a sacrificed human God, who comes as Christ and redeems the Adamic sin. The code of honor, one might say, is similarly transcended in *Devotion*. It is superseded and defeated as a partial truth, but without being destroyed or removed—as the Old Testament is superseded by the New.

The attraction and repulsion which lead Eusebio towards and away from Julia, and which induce her to act in complementary movements, have been discussed in terms of the Adam and Eve

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analogy and the body-soul analogy. Similarly, a movement from repulsion to attraction is evident in the relationship between Curcio and Eusebio, and the effect is concentrated wholly in Act Three. Two of Curcio's speeches summarize this shift: "his chilling blood cries out / to me so timidly. And if / his blood were not my own in part, / it would not beckon me, / nor would I hear it cry." "How I hated him / alive; now how I grieve his death!" As soon as father and son confront one another, there is mutual affinity between them, though they do not know they are related. It is so intense that Eusebio refuses to use his sword to fight Curcio. When they struggle barehanded, the sense of their combat is dreamlike—a scene reminiscent of a more famous father-son contention in Calderón's *Life is a Dream*. Eusebio, who is unwilling to surrender to the law, will nevertheless give himself up to Curcio, out of "respect." And Curcio, though he has long hunted Eusebio, suddenly offers to let him escape. Eusebio refuses, and when Curcio's men arrive, the father intervenes; to his men's astonishment he suggests the alternative of a legal trial: "I'll be / your advocate before the law." But it is too late; the honor machine has already moved closer to its inexorable goal: Eusebio is mortally wounded by Curcio's men at the foot of the cross.

In his despair Curcio recognizes the inefficacy of the honor machine and admits a guilt he can no longer hide from himself. The mystery of the twin birth at the cross is a mystery which he, as the surrogate of honor and fallen pride, is not prepared to contend with. Mercy is not a principle which autocratic honor accepts. We witness Curcio's gradually increasing helplessness, a condition which the avenging thunder god of Genesis might experience in confronting the imminent redemption of his "son," Adam, gradually transfigured into Christ. Overwhelmed by the clemency of the Cross, Curcio further astonishes his men by telling them to "Take up this broken body / of Eusebio's, and lay it / mournfully aside till there is time / to build an honorable / sepulcher from which his ashen gaze / may contemplate my tears." To this request they reply with the outraged

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disbelief of men who have similarly become cogs in the honor machine.

Tirso. What? How can you think of burying
a man in holy ground who died
beyond the pale of Church and God?

Blas. For anyone like that, a grave here
in the wilderness is good enough!

Curcio. Oh, villainous revenge!
Are you still so outraged
you must strike at him beyond the grave?

[*Exit CURCIO, weeping.*]

But there is still the final and clinching irony to account for. If Curcio admits the defeat of honor before the miracle of heavenly clemency, how can he suddenly revert to the vengeance principle at the end when he tries to destroy Julia? Curcio unwittingly instigates this turn and countermovement by recognizing the mercy principle; his recognition calls forth Julia's confession.

Curcio. My dearest son! You were not
so wretched or forsaken
after all, when in your tragic death
you merit so much glory.
Now if only Julia
would recognize her crime.

Julia. God help me! What is this I hear,
what ominous revelation?
Can it be that I who was
Eusebio's lover
was his sister too? Then let
my father and the whole wide world,
let everybody know about
my crimes. My perversions hound
and overwhelm me, but I shall be
the first to shout them out.
Let every man alive be told
that I am Julia, Julia
the criminal, and of all

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the infamous women ever born,
the worst. Henceforth my penances
will be as public as the sins
I have confessed. I go now to beg
forgiveness of the world for the vile
example I have given it,
and pray that God forgive
the crime of all my life.

Here Curcio erupts and attempts to kill her, at which she pledges her word to the Cross to "atone beneath your sign / and be born again to a new life," and the Cross bears her away to heaven. If we momentarily overlook this heavy melodramatic turn, Calderón's serious allegorical purpose will emerge. Desperate and defeated though he is, Curcio still incarnates the vengeance principle—a principle which survives in him, even after he has been chastened by the higher law. In this he is like Eusebio, who represents the mercy principle and must survive his own death and revive in order to be shriven. Because he embodies the honor code, Curcio must strike out as he does, spontaneously, against Julia's offense and dishonor. And her offense in this instance is precisely her public confession of guilt instigated by Curcio's wishful remark. For according to the code, the public admission that one's honor has been wronged compounds the wrong that has already been committed against it. And so Julia's public declaration not only constitutes the last blow against her father's crumbling defenses but also makes explicit the cruel inoperativeness of the honor code when faced with any personal human cry for clemency. Julia's assertion that she will make her penances public is intolerable to honor and inadmissible to a code which categorically denies forgiveness. By implication there is no forgiveness on earth but only in heaven.

If as an honor figure Curcio cannot extend mercy, he is likewise incapable, as a figure for the Genesis thunder god, of offering reconciliation to Julia. And in the final exchange between the two, we are also reminded that Julia's "crime of all my life" like Eve's "crime" is not forgivable in terms of the old

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dispensation in Genesis, where the sexual act is incestuous and the original crime of the creation underlies the discovery of good and evil. Significantly, it is when she learns of the incestuous relationship with Eusebio that Julia makes her public declaration. As a type of Eve, Julia is the quintessential criminal ("of all / the infamous women ever born, / the worst"), universally damned by authoritarian law. Only the figure of a sacrificed god, according to the new dispensation, can redeem her, as Eusebio does at the end. We see then that honor is a form of the old, merciless, unregenerate, earthbound, dehumanized, patriarchal law, which is ultimately self-defeating. It prevails to the end, and presumably will continue to exist on earth opposing the merciful, regenerative, humane, and matriarchal law of heaven, symbolized in the Cross which has vanquished it.

At the conclusion of the play, where the Cross triumphs so resolutely, so providentially, and so patently as a *deus ex machina*, we are inclined to minimize its connection with the rest of the drama. Yet its function throughout is not only essential to the theme but also integral to the action. One might say that the final appearance of the Cross culminates many symbolic manifestations, from the beginning, of an extraordinarily complex role. And that role, in fact, is to serve dramatically as a complementary mechanism, a machine working in counteremotion to the honor machine.

We first hear of the Cross early in the first act in Eusebio's lengthy recital of the events of his life, while holding off Lisardo. Eusebio's story is eager, rapt, proud, enthusiastic. He has been the subject of strange, benevolent miracles; he rapidly imparts his sense of wonder and mystery at these happenings—and is never so confident again. The effect of the speech, more notable for the feeling it releases than for its literal sense, is to introduce a sensation of power and authority into a tense situation. The tension leading to an impasse is exemplified in the opening scene of the play by the peasants Gil and Menga, vainly trying to drag their stalled donkey out of the mud. When Lisardo and Eusebio arrive, the impasse is augured in their pale, silent, distraught appearance. Gil describes them:

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"My, how pale / they look, and in the open fields / so early in the morning! / I'm sure they must have eaten mud / to look so constipated." Whenever the Cross is introduced subsequently, the effect is similarly to dispel an impasse, initiate a contrary action, or metaphorically to lend a new dimension to the scene. Eusebio's Cross "that towered over me at birth, / and whose imprint is now pressed / upon my breast" is a talismanic object which he serves and which actively serves him, symbolic of his paternity, a charismatic "symbol of some secret cause, / unrevealed as yet." And its "secret cause" gradually begins to emerge in a series of significant actions.

Lisardo's dying plea "by the Cross Christ died on" deflects Eusebio's sword and makes him carry the fallen man away to be shriven, an action which later aids in Eusebio's own redemption. When Lisardo's corpse lies between the divided lovers, Julia and Eusebio, there is a curious dramatic effect which the theatricality of the scene emphasizes. Curcio's two living children seem here to form the horizontal appendages of a cruciform figure whose vertical stalk is the dead Lisardo. As the pair speak across the corpse we realize that it is the only time when the three children are joined together in the play. Joined, but also divided by the visible presence of the dead brother. That one power of the Cross is to join and another is to separate will appear significantly again.

At the beginning of Act Two, Alberto, the priest, is saved when Eusebio's bullet is stopped by the holy book the priest carries in his tunic. The metaphor Eusebio uses underlies the merciful power of the Cross to deflect the course of violence: "How well that flaming shot / obeyed your text by turning / stubborn lead softer than wax!" By this token Eusebio releases the priest who will reappear only once, in the third act, to confess him. The next reference to the Cross occurs in Curcio's soliloquy describing the miracle which saved his wife after she protested her innocence at the foot of the Cross, where he thought he had killed her. There the twins Eusebio and Julia were born, though, as we learn later, Eusebio was left behind when Rosmira was rescued by divine intervention and brought

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home with Julia. Subsequently, when Eusebio forces his way into the convent to violate Julia, he discovers that she too bears the imprint of the Cross on her breast, and fearfully withdraws. Here the Cross serves to prevent the incestuous act, and in doing so separates the Adamic from the Christ figure in Eusebio. Julia and Eusebio are not meant to repeat the paradisiacal crime under the Eden tree; they must now be separated from one another. They are only destined to be joined in an act of heavenly redemption at the Cross where they were born.

As we observed, when Eusebio falls from the ladder leaning against the convent wall, he symbolically enacts Adam's fall. Of this fact he seems dimly aware on rising: "Oh Cross Divine, this I promise you / and take this solemn vow / with strict attention to each word: / wherever I may find you, / I shall fall upon my knees / and pray devoutly, with all my heart." Julia, too, vaguely senses that her destiny is to follow Eusebio's "fall" by way of the ladder, though she is not impelled by heavenly signs nor aware, as he is, of the Cross's "secret cause." At this point she may simply be following the Genesis prescription—"and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee"—when she says, "This is where he fell; then I / must fall there too and follow him." Or perhaps she is feeding her desire with a later rationalization: "Does not my creed tell me / that once I give assent in thought / I thereby commit the crime?" Yet when she continues in this vein, we see that she has clearly identified her destiny with Eusebio's, though she may not know what that destiny is.

Did not Eusebio scale
these convent walls for me?
And did I not feel pleased
to see him run such risks
for my sake? Then why am I afraid?
What scruple holds me back?
If I leave now I do the very thing
Eusebio did when he entered;
and just as I was pleased with him,
he'll be pleased to see me too,

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considering the risks I've taken
for his sake. Now I have assented,
I must take the blame. And if
the sin itself be so tremendous,
will enjoying it be any
less so? Since I have assented
and am fallen from the hand of God. . .

In modern terms the covert incest motive may be fused here with the affinity science has noted between closely related persons, particularly twins, causing similar behavior patterns because of similarities between their neuro-electrical activities. But in Christian terms it is clear that once Julia "falls" (i.e. descends the ladder), she is seized by the chilling evil of the symbolic act: "I find that my esteem for mankind, / honor, and my God is nothing / but an arid waste. Like an angel / flung from Heaven in my demonic / fall I feel no stirring of / repentance."

With this admission she becomes Eve, the transgressor in Eden and cohort of the fallen angel, the eternal rebel against the patriarchal order of society. Her rebellion is an assault against man's contempt, the authoritarian abuse of her fruitful power to love and to heal the divisive prohibitions which sacrifice individual men to its order:

I am alone, in my confusion
and perplexity. Ingrate, are these
your promises to me? Is this
the sum of what you called your love's mad
passion, or is it my love's madness?
How you persisted in your suit—
now by threats, now by promises,
now as lover, now as tyrant,
till I at last submitted to you.
But no sooner had you become
master of your pleasure
and my sorrow than you fled
before you had possessed me.
Now in escaping you have
vanquished me entirely.
Merciful Heaven, I am lost

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and dead! Why does nature provide
the world with poisons when the venom
of contempt can kill so swiftly?
So his contempt will kill me,
since to make the torment worse
I must follow him who scorns me.
When has love been so perverse before? . . .
Such is woman's nature that
against her inclination
she withholds that pleasure
which she most delights to give.

The capacity to sin is no different from the capacity to hurt and be hurt, perversely, against one's inclination. But to tell one's hurt, confess one's sin and be forgiven is to triumph over the corruptions of evil enforced by social law. As Julia says, this forgiveness can be extended by the restorative power of providence:

faith teaches
there is nothing which the clemency
of Heaven cannot touch or reach:
all the sparkling constellations,
all the sands of all the oceans,
every atom, every mote upon
the air, and all these joined together,
are as nothing to the sins
which the good Lord God can pardon.

Contempt, scorn, division, separation, hopelessness, despair—these are the goads to crime and destructiveness. And this is what Julia recognizes when the ladder leading back to the convent is withdrawn:

Ah, but I begin to understand
the depths of my misfortune.
This is a sign my way is barred,
and thus when I would strive
to creep back, a penitent,
I am shown my cause is hopeless.
Mercy is refused me.

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Now a woman doubly scorned,
I shall perpetrate such
desperate deeds even Heaven
will be astounded, and the world
will shudder at them till
my perfidy outrages all time
to come, and the deepest pits
of hell shall stand agape
with horror at my crimes.

Understood symbolically, according to the dialectic of fall and redemption, male and female principles, the subversion of humanity by the authoritarian necessity of honor, Julia's intentions and subsequent crimes are not the ludicrous things they appear to be when viewed according to cause-and-effect realism. They are dramatic epiphanies proceeding from closely related lines of thought, feeling, and action rising from the implications of the thematic "devotion to the cross." It is only the misuse of symbolic meaning which is ludicrous. Calderón makes this clear immediately following Julia's speech, at the start of Act Three.

Gil enters "covered with crosses; a very large one is sewn on his breast." The situation is reversed: a man is now following a woman's "bidding," as Gil says with regard to Menga, adding,

I go . . .

scouring the mountainside for firewood,
and for my own protection
I've concocted this stratagem.
They say Eusebio loves crosses.
Well, here I am, armed from head to foot
with them.

But Gil's cross is not charismatic. He sees Eusebio, hides in a bush and is immediately stuck with thorns. Eusebio at this point is brooding over the meaning of the Cross inscribed on Julia's breast: "I was driven, by the impulse of a higher power / whose cause prevailed against my will, / forbidding me to trespass on / the Cross—the Cross that I respect . . . / Oh Julia, the two of us were born / subject to that sign, and thus I fear /

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the portents of a mystery / which only God can understand." And the scene where he discovers Gil is oddly discordant, mixing serious and comic elements to such effect that Eusebio's cause appears ludicrous.

Gil [aside]. I can't stand it any longer;
I'm stung all over!

Eusebio. There is
someone in the bushes. Who's there?

Gil [aside]. Well, here's where I get tangled
in my snare.

Eusebio [aside]. A man tied to a tree,
and wearing a cross on his breast!
I must be true to my word and kneel.

Gil. Why do you kneel, Eusebio?
Are you saying your prayers, or what?
First you tie me up, then you pray
to me. I don't understand.

Eusebio. Who are you?

Gil. Gil. Don't you remember?
Ever since you tied me up here
with that message, I've been yelling out
my lungs but, just my luck,
nobody's yet come by to free me.

Eusebio. But this is not the place
I left you.

Gil. That's true, sir.
The fact is, when I realized that
no one was passing by, I moved on,
still tied, from one tree to the next,
until I reached this spot.
And that's the only reason
why it seems so strange to you.

[EUSEBIO frees him.]

Eusebio [aside]. This simpleton may be of use
to me in my misfortune.

—Gil, I took a liking to you
when we met the other time.
So now let us be friends.

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Gil.

Fair enough,

and since we're friends I'll never
go back home but follow you instead.

And we'll be highwaymen together.

They say the life's ideal—not a stitch
of work from one year to the next.

Gil's mention of "the other time" refers to the occasion in Act Two when Eusebio found Gil and Menga in the mountains, had them tied to tree-trunks, and left them with a crucial message for Curcio—a message Gil fails to deliver. The message has to do with something which Curcio does not yet know, and by its means Eusebio would attempt to reconcile himself with Lisardo's father and absolve himself from the charge of murder. Eusebio does not know that Gil did not deliver the message, nor is it certain that if Gil had done so the effect would be to alter the course of events up to this point. But Gil's appearance immediately after Julia's speech at the end of Act Two, the absurd story he tells Eusebio about progressing "still tied, from one tree to the next," and Eusebio's own curiously quixotic reaction to Gil's cross are all, at first glance, puzzling and disconcerting details. For Gil's antics are bathetic to the same degree that Eusebio's devoutness is ludicrous, so that both seem to be defects of taste and dramatic emphasis.

Considered symbolically, however, the scene is anything but bathetic or implausible; on the contrary, it comes as a sharp, immediate reminder of the opposing claims of honor and mercy, of vengeance and devotion, the very theme developed in the play's movements and countermovements we have been tracing. In effect Calderón is reminding us that Eusebio's devotion is a cause squarely opposed to Curcio's vengeance, and that the one has its provenance in a heavenly mystery symbolized by the Cross as the other has in the code of honor. Troubled by the symbol on Julia's breast, Eusebio is caught off-guard when Gil's presence interrupts his thoughts. He does not know it is Gil; all he sees is the cross on Gil's breast, to which he automatically responds by kneeling respectfully, according to his vow. It is

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the symbol and not the man he responds to. The act immediately makes him out to be a fool—not the crazy fool Gil takes him for, but the “fool in Christ,” the devoted servant of the Cross. Gil, of course, has correctly guessed that wearing the cross will protect him from Eusebio, just as it saved Alberto, the priest, at the beginning of Act Two. What Gil does not understand is the objective power and principle of the Cross; and we may see in his being entangled in the briers until Eusebio frees him an exemplum of this mistaken view. The absurd story he tells about moving “still tied, from one tree to the next” is an extension of his mistaken view because it supposes that Eusebio, though dangerous, is merely simple-minded. But the effect of Gil’s story is to identify him and to bring Eusebio’s attention away from the symbol in order to recognize “the simpleton” who is wearing it. Eusebio awakes to his own situation, his self-defensive strife against Curcio’s pursuit of vengeance, in which Gil “may be of use” to him as one who knows the mountainous terrain. On the other hand, all Gil can conclude about Eusebio’s offer of friendship is that the other’s addiction to crosses somehow involves the charmed life of brigandry—“not a stitch / of work from one year to the next.” The fact is, however, that Eusebio’s situation is narrowing and, as later events show, he is ridden by anxiety and by the burden of his cause. He is fast approaching his own end, which will entail the complete revelation of heaven’s secret symbolized by the Cross. But while waiting for the mystery to unfold, he must contend with Curcio’s vengeance. As a result, he acts feverishly, half terrified, half audacious, as a man aware of some impending catastrophe would act.

This is notable in his response to Julia, who has reappeared dressed as a man, and who after attempting to kill him has told the story of her crimes. He says:

I listen to you fascinated,
enchanted by your voice,
bewitched by everything you say,
although the sight of you

Calderón's Strange Mercy Play

fills me with dread . . .

I fear Heaven's

retribution looming over me . . .

I live in such horror of that Cross,

I must avoid you.

His anxiety is also apparent in the orders he gives his men, and later in his hand-to-hand encounter with his father.

I do not know what reverence

the sight of you instills in me.

But I know your suffering awes me

more than your sword . . .

and truth to tell, the only

victory I seek is to fall

upon my knees and beg you

to forgive me.

And so it is almost with relief that he receives the mortal wound at the hands of Curcio's men. He can at last yield to his father and die; but also—and this he does not know—he is to be resurrected in order to receive absolution at the foot of the cross where he was born. In this way his destiny is fulfilled, his secret cause revealed, his life career run full cycle. But there is also the posthumous miracle of his heavenly ascension which includes the sanction of Julia. Besides proving Julia's earlier declaration that "there is nothing which the clemency / of Heaven cannot touch or reach," this last miracle reclaims her from the perversely male-dominated role of revenger ("the symbol / of terrifying vengeance") in which the honor machine had cast her. There is perhaps a conclusive irony in this last turn: that the monolithic, all-pervasive engine of the honor machine on earth can only be transcended by the more powerful, absolutist machine of heavenly mercy.

Robert B. Johnson

CONTREMARCHE

Ce mois de mai et ses solitudes
S'avancant vers les bords de l'été
Montent sur les brouillards culottés
Par les verts d'estivales préludes.

Plus haut, la jeune susurrations
Annonce à la feuille synchronique
Que tout son teint rose s'alambique
Avant d'être lavé des passions.

Beau printemps des suicides en Suède,
Beautés des synthèses de sentiers
Moyenâgeux, tordus d'églantiers
Aux parfums curieux, ô centipède!

Je souffre mal ce colimaçon—
Qui sera crochet dur, puis fougère,
Demeure de quelque ver de terre—
Il veut croître là où nous passons.

Moite linceul de ma contremarche,
Arrête par tes sales bâillons
Ce mai grossi par tes longs paillons,
Et fonds en moi tenu sous ton arche!

PROMENADE

à la ville de David, Province de Chiriquí,
République de Panamá

- 10 h. Nuit velouteuse qu'en hâte a frappée
Un soleil pressé; pointillisme noir
Et saphir, premières nuances du soir
A la silencieuse onomatopée.
- 11 h. Noircurs, cantinas, pâleurs, rhums lamés,
Plaza blanchie et longs bras de chemise,
Blancheur de blouses aux publiques lises,
Marche scandée avec torses rimés.
- minuit Tours et retours vers la huitième rue,
Files de tremblotements à minuit,
Faibles lueurs qui lancent bonsoirs gratuits,
Grincements à huis clos, minutes drues.
- 1 h. Ruelle poussiéreuse absorbant les pieds,
Rythmes mauves s'insinuant aux oreilles,
¿Qué tal? matinal auprès des bouteilles,
Bichos ailés, saleté qui leur sied.
- 2 h. Verres aux mesures gélatineuses,
Verres serrés, puis insondables traits
Des verres ambrés aux parfums d'engrais,
Miroir en face à l'image hideuse.
- 3 h. Pas en sourdine et deux rires nerveux,
Têtes qu'il faut que la glace reflète
Passent. — Et gravé pour la minute bête
Le sens du soir dans un portrait baveux.

Phyllis Webb

MAD GARDENER TO THE SEA...

Mad gardener to the sea, the moon
rages across the sky to tend
oceans of an unloving dark
and the bone-blooming skeleton:
Beyond all Paradise, all Arden
moon multiplies the garden;
nor doth the coral orchard care
man dreameth ever back to water—

l'homme inconnu et solitaire.

So many gardens on dry land
bloom in this darkness and despair.

THE GLASS CASTLE

The glass castle is my image for the mind
that if outmoded has its public beauty.
It can contain both talisman and leaf,
and private action, homely disbelief.
And I have lived there as you must
and scratched with diamond and gathered diamond dust.
Have signed the castle's tense and fragile glass
and hear the antique whores and stoned Cassandras
call me, and I answered in the one voice I knew:
"I am here. I do not know. . . ."
but moved the symbols and polished up the view.
For who can refrain from action
(there is always a princely kiss for the Sleeping Beauty)
when even to put out the light takes a steady hand,
for the reward of darkness in a glass castle
is starry and full of glory.

I do not mean I shall not crack the pane.
I merely make a statement, judicious and polite,
that in this poise of crystal space
I balance and I claim the five gods of reality
to bless and keep me sane.

Hugh Stretton

Nugatory Notes

A PART FROM THE CIGARETTE BURN through chapter two there is nothing wrong with my book except the trifle of five chapters not being written yet and a certain amount of child art from forgetting to keep it five feet from the floor at all times. Never mind now, here is this Junior supposed to be telling me *The Causes of World War One* and all she does is babble of objectivity. I should do something about her prose if I had the time. Objectivity, hell. Objectivity is how many pages are in Courtney T. Whelen's book. Subjectivity on the other hand is whether it is intelligent. Even IQs are not as objective as was once thought and for a book to be intelligent is subjective absolutely. Scarcely anything is worse. Courtney is not subjective, he is an Associate Professor. Promotion is another thing that has got to be objective lest rank favoritism slip in. My father liked the joke, he always said you could rely on the old ones, they had stood the test of time, about the drunk looking for his dime under a street lamp. "Where did you lose it?" "Down the alley." "Why look for it here?" "Ya can't see a thing down there, stoopid." That one knew about objectivity before even the committees on tenure and promotion dropped to it. Why pretty soon they are going to put the professors themselves on the weighing machine; there has been all this subjectivity slipping in with the big and little typefaces and the hardcover-paperback gamble, you can't trust the weighing machine with a book any more. But put the professor on and there you have him. If it says one hundred eighty-two, why you know any machine in the country would say just that.

So instead of getting on with chapter three which nastily

Nugatory Notes

exposes various explanatory devices of pragmatic sociology, especially Courtney T. Whelen's, what must I do but read forty-seven papers on The Causes of World War One which say things like "The fixaton of guilt upon one particular set of circumstances is secondary to ascertaining the situation which allowed such a conflagration to develop."

Courtney would know what to write in the margin of that. "Ugh!" Or because this particular one is pretty, "Darling, learn to write." She likes that. Her mother is a part time clerk in a drugstore and she makes out in a place like this on a scholarship and the Student Loan. It means a lot when Associate Professors fraternize. Well anyway—"Interesting but could be clearer. C minus."

Now where was I... *the logic of historical explanation which covertly inhabits any operational definitions is such as to render even Zetterberg's austere tests nugatory.* And I complain about a little thing like a conflagration—why that girl never got within a long spit of nugatory. Try *Operational definitions conceal an historical logic which escapes even Zetterberg's tests.* Bad but better. Non-conflagratory. The trouble with that girl, it costs too much to teach her. What ought to be done to that paper would cost a day would cost five pages would cost promotion would cost cash. Because nobody would see me do it and it would still be subjective if they did. I would be imparting literacy, and if anything is more subjective than teaching, literacy is. Meanwhile I have a transmission job coming up at around a hundred and twenty five dollars and one summer left before some highly objective school fees set in. But concentrate:

The purpose of this demonstration of the historical element in such operational definitions is not to denigrate them as lacking in objectivity; it is to denigrate objectivity as lacking in relevance to such definitions. Aaaaaghgh. Try It escapes Zetterberg's tests because they test for objectivity. Objectivity can be a quality of measurement, but not of explanation. Courtney never writes things twice, and this is not because he gets them right the first time. But then he chooses better-known

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things to say. Courtney has developed many a conflagration, and in print. The sad thing is how bright that girl was born. Traces remain: "Thus Renouvin arrives at what he considers to be the least common denominator or last differentiating element." Barbaric. But a thought, true, and her own. She detects the man's trick. She could go right on and see what is wrong with the trick if only someone . . . look, I have children to feed, and preferably not at Ohio State where in any case they probably publish even faster. To this girl it would have to be spelled out as to a child, bit by bit, slow and friendly. None of that "Try words instead of bubblegum" and "Button up—your concepts are showing." Not brisk or flip or friv. It would take three words per word of hers and there are two thousand of hers. Divide by half for speed, multiply by the twenty other conflagrationists in this batch, and it would cost ten days would cost fifty pages would cost. . . .

But it occurs to my very inventive conscience that what she has done has all the macabre charm of a horror movie and perhaps it would interest a wider, etc. Because it is genuine. It is none of your pastiche jargon pieces concocted by some professor of English for a despair-piece in a teachers' magazine. In full faith and innocence she thought that she thought those thoughts. When I reflect that she is twenty, she has been three years at this place which is right up there in the ivy with Vassar and Smith, she has a two-point-eight average and she wrote *this*, it has me wondering what they are being encouraged to go on thinking in say the Teachers College belt. So maybe she and I ought to print this piece with marginalia in some magazine that really pays and fix the Student Loan and the kicking transmission with a fifty-fifty split. For all those deeply concerned several times weekly by this Crisis in Our Colleges we now rend the veil for a rare glimpse of what is positively not characterizing that intimate faculty-student relationship around which after all the whole educational, etc. Courtney certainly does not let his attention wander from his book like this.

Fortunately she left a wide margin.

"Historically speaking" she says and I quote "the fixaton"

Nugatory Notes

(every word of this is *sic* so why single out this one) "of guilt upon one particular set of circumstances is secondary to ascertaining the situation which allowed the conflagration to develop. The choice between different interpretations of an historical event involves both objectivity and subjectivity. That is to say problems of an historiographical nature deal with objective fact and the subsequent personal involvement that derives from selection and emphasis of these facts."

So here we go. Look up guilt in a dictionary, circumstances cannot have it. This is not unnecessary pedantry. It is necessary pedantry. Through the rest of this essay you use a textbook classification of explanations, and this classification depends on distinctions between guilt and responsibility and cause. If you want to use those categories you must not muddle those distinctions. Next what is this difference between circumstances and situation? Perhaps you wanted to distinguish part of the situation from all of it. If you meant to do that you could have written "We must understand the whole situation before we can judge the importance of its parts." But that makes "secondary" mean "later" and it commonly means "less important." But I guess it means later here, because it is going to contradict your conclusion on page six if it doesn't. Another thing, subjectivity and objectivity are words you do not use in my class unless you have had instruction in philosophy and know what you are doing. There is a safe alternative in the translation of these sentences suggested later on. Did you really mean "historiographical"? History is about history and historiography is about books. I suspect you of just liking to be graphic but since the sentence could make sense either way, you are forgiven this time. But not for the adjectival phrase "of a . . . nature" which does nothing the adjective would not do except clutter the sentence. This next "objective" does nothing for its fact in *your* mind which does not contain any concept of a non-objective fact. "Subsequent" could have a crude meaning which would be unnecessary or a less crude meaning which would be wrong. If it means that history is written after it has happened you need not bother to say so. If it means that the historian's

bias arises after he has decided what to abstract and identify as facts, it is untrue. Do you mean "personal involvement"? Do you mean the historian's self-identification with other people, or do you mean his passions or his values or his morality or his social theories or his political commitments or his what? Whatever it is, you are prevented from writing it by a disease called psychologism whose sufferers feel compelled to change all statements of thought into statements about the conditioning of the thinker. You seem to use personal involvement to mean purpose, which it does not mean, though it might sometimes explain why a man has a purpose. But you are simultaneously using personal involvement to separate subjective from objective thoughts (which you may if you wish, just this once, call normative from technical thoughts); and personal involvement cannot separate these for you. Historians can be passionately involved in an exact count of say corpses and entertain the most eccentric moralities with bored airs of detachment. If you want crude, vague distinguishers, try "knowledge" and "judgment." And in any case you are saying the opposite of what you mean. You do not mean that the personal involvement derives from the selection of facts. You mean that the selection of facts derives from the personal involvement. This is the first of eleven syntactical reversals of intended meaning in this essay, which you will find noted in the margin as you go along. But before you go along, here is a translation of the last two sentences:

"Historians have to select facts as well as discover them. Their different purposes make them disagree about the choice of facts, though not usually about their truth."

It can't be quite what you meant to say, or you would have said something more like it. Please understand that I am not complaining about the argument your words conceal, though I don't agree with it, or about your style, though it insults a versatile language, or that you don't communicate clearly, though you certainly don't. What bothers me is that you do not seem to understand that all this bad language prevents thought inside your head. For example if you had turned the sentence around

Nugatory Notes

into transitive form, or used a sensible intransitive verb instead of "derive," you would have got "personal involvement" doing such clearly silly things that you would have thought again, as well as writing again. Nor am I complaining about jargon. Be as ugly and technical as you like, but the test of a technical word is whether it excludes more unwanted meaning than a plain word would do, and includes more wanted meaning than a plain word would. "Personal involvement" probably excludes what you intended and certainly includes what you did not intend.

So it goes. Presently it stops. I eat. I wipe up what others failed to eat or tried to eat twice. There is a parlor baseball episode and I wipe up after that too, carnations and water and fragments of what contained them, all fortunately past their best at the time. Their mother cleans them and I tell about various anthropomorphic rabbits and kiss them goodnight and get them drinks of water and kiss them goodnight and hell, no, you've had all you're due for and kiss them goodnight. At this point I might as well kiss their mother goodnight too for all she is likely to see of me for the rest of this night. Around nine oh five I am declaring that Mr. Konne Zilliacus does not interpret the war this way because of his extreme socialist background, he did not have any extreme socialist background, many people with backgrounds like his are conservative, he explains the war this way because he just chooses to think socialist thoughts. Around nine forty I move from her margin to the backs of some discarded drafts of Chapter Two to cope with "In trying to evaluate a commentary on a particular historical situation what we must do rather is find the one that satisfies basic enigmas and at the same time provides a logical emphasis on one specific factor." Around ten forty I am saying cocoa will be fine sweetie just fine, and your opening "However" seems to contradict the sense of "the context of the trends of the times obviates the mitigation of individual responsibility." The main clause is plain enough but are you sure you know what obviates means? Did you perhaps mean "with lives at stake men have to answer for their acts" or did you perhaps

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mean "in such a baffling world men have to be forgiven their mistakes" and have you noticed that the first contradicts the paragraph before and the second contradicts the paragraph that comes next?

Around eleven forty I have about finished her and me, both. The marginalium is still not good. It lacks art and psychology. It does not convey that old interpersonal relationship of being squarely on her side against her foolish mind. She will therefore cry. That is why it all has to be down in writing so she can read it over again dry. Oh *goddam*. Can this poor mind now add ten lines to chapter three? *Indeed the content of the ubiquitous ideal of objectivity would seem to require drastic...* She's got me doing it. Poor little one, what chance has she against our truly hep library of social science when even I with my doctor of philosophy... try *An explanation merely relates things in a way that satisfies my curiosity. My curiosity is part of me; if you require that my explanations be objective it is not the explanations but the curiosity that you dragoon. The point may be illustrated by a simple example from pedagogy. It is as firm a principle of teaching as of democracy, that the need for common rules of thought must not be misconstrued as a need for uniform purposes of thought. So every teacher knows that he must discipline each student's methods to the useful service of that student's unique purpose and curiosity...*

Mustn't he, Courtney?

Dolores Stewart

POST MORTEM

They've come to spend an hour by the sea,
O how intently reading news,
the papers, his and hers.
The waves creep up the sleeves of sand
unnoticed as they neatly turn the pages.

Her eyes are bright and busy as a gull's,
prying in the scandals,
picking out the fishy bits,
pecking at her husband out of habit though she knows
how clean his bones are kept.

They've closed the windows of their car
against the long caress of sound,
the dampness taking down her curls,
the seawinds trifling with their cautious dress.

O how intently once
they must have mused on one another here.
A little blind, they found a braille,
the tides rose in the rounds of sand
and they were not afraid to drown,

but life had business with them yet
and pulled them out to dry on higher ground.

$$E = MC^2$$

There is another knowing, neither bare nor pure
as this you use to tear the sheer
fabric of air
with rockets mounting at the speed of thought,

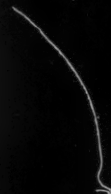
another knowing, another way
uncurls in pods and wombs,
sweetens in apples, feeds in swarms
upon the map of nerves.

In the grove there is a tree;
in the tree a white heart;
in that heart another spirit
unreconciled to darkness:

the wanton you imprisoned
in Rome, in Galilee, here in this city,
long ago and now,
not to be unlocked
by any key but love's.

In the grove we are,
women with something angry
and hungry in our hearts.

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THE ETCHINGS OF JACQUES CALLOT
WITH A NOTE BY A. HYATT MAYOR



SOME AGES IN THE PAST seem quite close to us today, while others, though more recent, seem to have withdrawn farther away. So the seventeenth century feels closer than the Victorian age because the Wars of Religion engaged men's minds in a struggle as bitter as our own theological combat with communism. The bigoted slugging of Protestant and Catholic buffeted its best graphic reporter, Jacques Callot, with knocks enough to make him our own brother.

Jacques Callot was born about 1592 at Nancy in Lorraine, which is a busy crossroads of Europe, being only 200 to 500 miles from Paris, Vienna, Antwerp and Amsterdam. Thus Europe came to Callot even before he started to travel, making him, almost inevitably, into the first international personality among the inventive print-makers. His art, which had culled something from everywhere, in turn imparted something to practically all subsequent etching and engraving.

Callot left his birthplace in Lorraine when he was about fifteen years old to explore Rome for some three years and Florence for ten more. When he was about twenty-eight he came home to Nancy, where he remained except for extended visits to Flanders and Paris. He died in 1635, aged about forty-three, of what may have been an intestinal cancer. In this brief time he made over fourteen hundred etchings and engravings that were instantly popular all across Europe and have remained so ever since. The Louvre in recent times has sold many impressions from original Callot copperplates.

The first and deepest influence on Callot was his native Lorraine, a struggling duchy about as big as Vermont, with a little capital, Nancy, of aggressive elegance. Callot recorded the close-packed ornament of its small palace garden in an enchanting etching where the cavaliers of the ducal court of Lorraine strut, and flash their rapiers and point with the deadly delicacy of a mosquito probing for a bite. Callot, as the son of the duke's master of ceremonies, learned an observance of decorum and a devotion to the laws of God. The father was also a herald, which means that he probably taught his young son to draw as exactly as one must do for coats of arms. Callot's countrymen were forever fighting off the wolfish soldiery of the surrounding great powers, so that the little boy soon knew horrors at first hand. When he came to etch his celebrated *Miseries of War* (certainly the inspiration for Goya's *Disasters*) he made something unforgettable out of the random destructiveness of war, its impersonal suffering, by presenting it with lucidity, good manners, and even a certain dramatic indifference that he must have learned by growing up in Lorraine in the midst of burning and butchering. The wars that he packed tight to bursting in his little etchings (enlarged on the inside covers) did not resemble those vast impersonal conflicts that mobilized whole populations from Napoleon until 1919. Callot's war was as intimate as our commando raids or underground sabotage. His soldiers fired a gun and saw a man drop. They scrounged for their suppers in the next farm, and hid as best they could in bushes and haystacks, to be shot if a child blabbed or pointed. No wonder his visions jump at us!

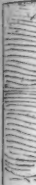
Callot started by engraving in the routine crosshatching that was common everywhere for copying paintings and drawings. In Florence he began to etch in sweeping, tapering parallels based, according to old accounts, on the pavement of Siena cathedral, but which could more credibly have come from Schongauer's engravings of over a century before. These parallels took less time to draw



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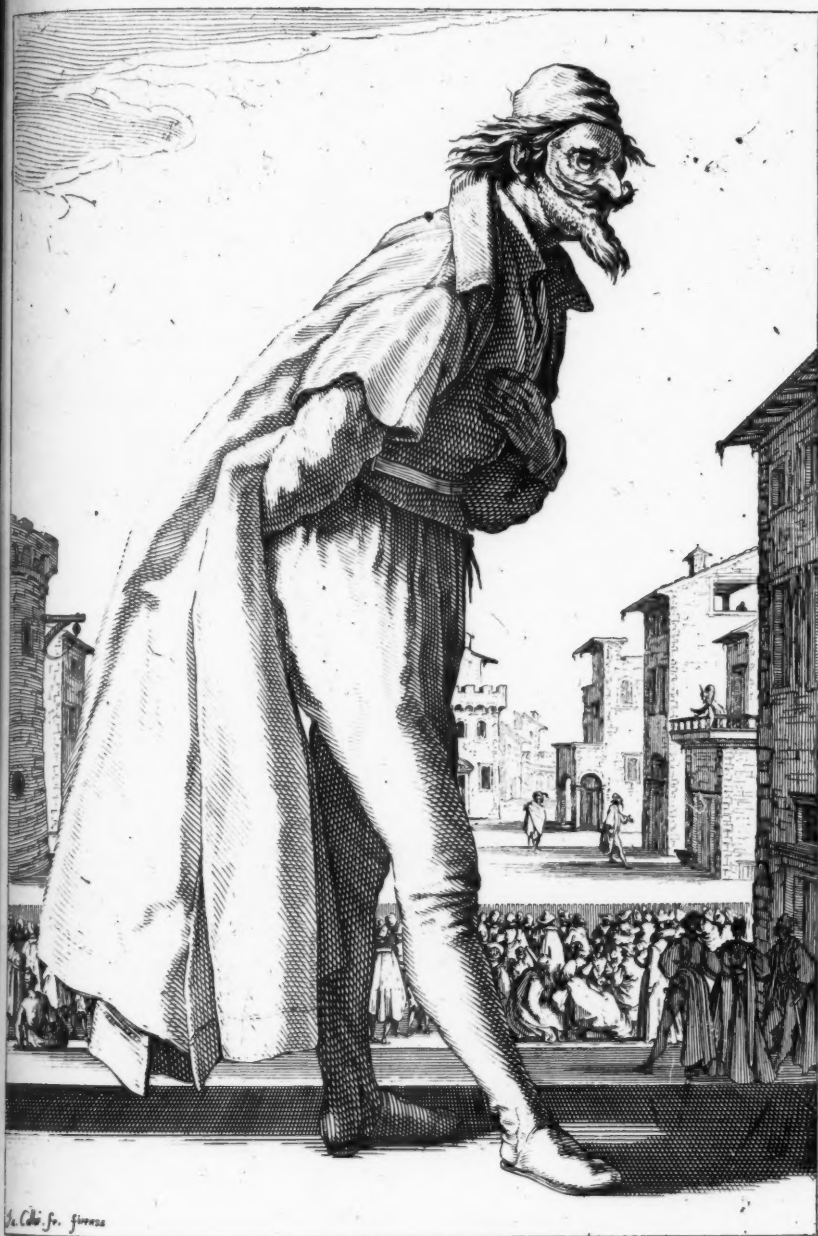
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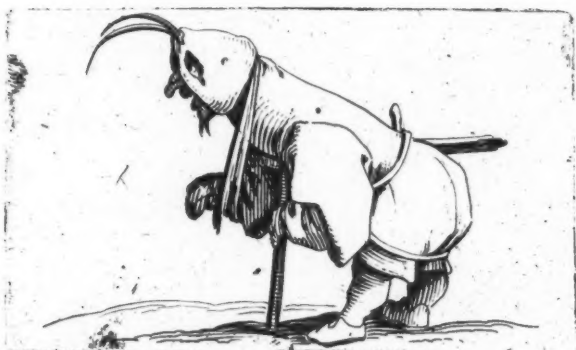


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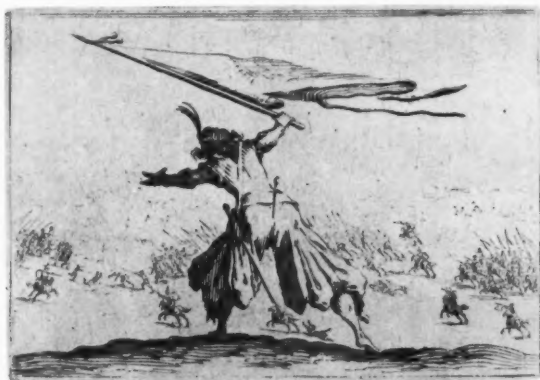
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Pantaloone From The Three Pantaloones 1618 Etching with engraving
Original size



*From Varie Figure Gobbi 1622 Etchings with
engraving Original size*



From Capricci 1618-1621 Etchings Original size

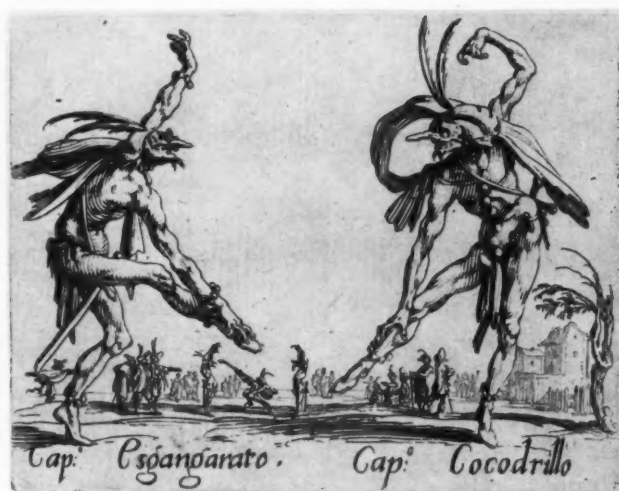


The Temptation of St. Anthony 1634 Etching Reduced





From Balli di Sfessania 1621 Four Etchings Original size





Invidia.

*From The Seven Capital Sins 1619 Etching
with engraving Enlarged*

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than crosshatchings, and they turn the roundness of a figure with grace and swing. Schongauer probably also gave him the Northern sense of the grotesque, the imagination to assemble a whole fauna of nightmare out of rooster beaks, crab claws, fish fins, and similar crisp giblets from market stalls. His sense of elegant unreality served him well in Florence when he created convincing visions of the sham battles on the Arno, the horse ballets and circus chariots in Medici festivities. His Northern eye was perhaps even more astonished by the prancing jesters who improvised ribaldries in public squares on platforms thrown together with loose boards. Callot's marvelous miniature etchings of the *commedia dell' arte* — the only pictures that convey its wit — helped to advertise it and make it one of Italy's most applauded exportations.

In Florence he also picked up a remarkable style of ornament which Buontalenti was developing for decorative stonework and Medici porcelain. Callot twisted these thick volutes, shaped like sagging ears and bellowing lips, to surround his prints. The popularity of his etchings helped to spread this swelling, curving ornament over all Europe.

Callot took much from his age, but gave back even more. His lively studies of picaresque beggary inspired the young Rembrandt — not to mention the Le Nains, Hogarth, and Piranesi. Callot extended the baroque conquest of space when he combined the expanse of a map with the sweep of a panorama in three vast etchings of military campaigns. These helicopter hoverings enlarged the horizon of landscape painting and probably suggested to Velázquez the famous composition of *The Lances*. Callot's big etchings of crowds contain more figures than any pictures before his time. Into *The Fair at Impruneta* he packed 1138 people, 45 horses, 67 donkeys, and 137 dogs, and he kept this multiplicity from tangling by clumping groups inside lanes of bare ground. This was more picturesque than the old scheme for crowds, which had massed heads like a bumper crop of pumpkins.

Callot's populous prints cost him a labor that is hard to imagine, for he prepared many sketches for each composition, as well as detailed pen studies for each figure, for each etched stroke. Over two thousand of his drawings still survive to show that he left nothing to chance, like an actor who rehearses most what is to seem most casual. Few artists with so strict a method have maintained such inexhaustible variety. The combination of talents enabled him to copy some of his most complex etchings exactly and with practically no loss of freshness. But Callot's most lasting innovation was technical. In Florence he thought of grounding his etching

plates with the tough varnish of mastic and linseed oil used by lute-makers, instead of the old uncertain etcher's ground, which often flaked and caused foul biting. When the new varnish ground turned etching into a predictable and dependable method of picture-making, it encouraged an artist to put more work onto a plate, because he could be reasonably sure that the acid would bite the metal where he had scratched the ground away and not elsewhere. Think of Callot's despair if foul biting had ruined his months of labor on the *The Temptation of St. Anthony*!

Callot scratched the gummy ground with a needle called a chope, which was nothing but a stout steel wire honed to a slant at the end. The slanting oval edge at the end of the wire was slowly turned while drawing a stroke in order to make the line start slim and gradually broaden, the way an engraved line swells. This tapering regular line transformed etching from free sketching into controlled geometry. Abraham Bosse adapted Callot's technique to make etching counterfeit engraving. For two centuries practically all so-called engravings were really etchings made to imitate engraving, with no graver work except for little touches to soften transitions and model delicate areas. After Callot most etchers either elaborated his technique or else, a century ago, consciously broke away from it.

In the age of autocrats the realist Callot, knowing that he could do nothing to alter events, observed princes and beggars, actors' antics, and executions with the detached, astute, and witty eye of the courtier. In his detachment he resembled those men and women of today who, as children, played hide and seek in shell craters, and had to cook and travel alone, their parents vanished in the war. Childhood experiences of the realities of fighting have burned out every trace of enthusiasm for any possible crusade in these people who cannot be seduced by slogans or parades. Callot — elegant, disciplined and disabused — had paid the price for this very contemporary detachment.

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All the Callots are reproductions from original impressions lent by Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Vershbow. The portrait of Callot was engraved by Leonard Baskin and printed from the block. The Callots were printed by the Meriden Gravure Company, the text by the Metcalf Printing Company, for The Massachusetts Review, Fall 1961.

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Oscar Handlin

The Civil War as Symbol and as Actuality

AGAIN AND AGAIN, Americans have come back, in their thinking, to the Civil War. Their persistent fascination with that great conflict reveals that it has become a symbol, to which significant meanings adhere. Yet now, a full century after the event, it is still difficult to make out the character of that symbol. Every mention of the War touches off deep emotional responses; why the responses should be so sensitive after the lapse of so long a time is by no means clear.

The echoes of the first shots fired in Charleston just over a century ago still reverberate among us. The next four years will no doubt be occupied with a monotonous refighting of the tried and true battles of the Civil War. The number of books on every aspect of the subject will mount steadily from its already high level. Since the roster of living writers is inadequate to supply the demand, publishers will pour forth a flood of reprints, good, bad, and indifferent; an amazing amount of nineteenth century material of dubious worth is already back in print. *Gone with the Wind* has returned and the mass media find frequent excuses to warm over the old stories.

All these retracings of familiar ground do little, however, to give Americans of 1961 an understanding of the struggle that tore their country apart a century ago. Rather they perpetuate myths that obscure the reality of the Civil War. In the midst of all this celebration it is difficult to make out what so many well-intentioned people are

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commemorating. An anniversary is an occasion for retrospective reconsideration. It affords an opportunity for analysis of what happened and why and for an estimate of the consequences that extend down to the present. But it is precisely in this respect that both the scholarly and the popular treatments of the Civil War touched off by the centennial fail us most seriously.

It is not suprising that this should be so. Interest in the Civil War is not new; it has been sustained at a steady level almost since the restoration of peace in 1865. The current outburst merely intensifies and accelerates tendencies present from the start. In a survey of the attitudes of the past century, two questions emerge. Why has there been such prolonged concern with the Civil War, more than with any other war in our past? And why has this concern not been illuminating about problems relevant to the lives of contemporary Americans? The answers to the two questions are, of course, related. The very character of men's interest in the war has prevented them from making out its meaning.

Three distinct strata of opinion run through the history of American thinking about the war. The three levels develop more or less concurrently but separately, reflecting the fact that various groups looked back to the Civil War, each for distinctive reasons of its own, and found different kinds of satisfaction in the process of doing so.

The genuine Civil War buffs have been a relatively small group but one influential beyond its numbers by virtue of its deep concern with the story of the struggle. The participants in the fighting themselves began in the 1870's to purchase the great flood of memoirs and histories of the war. And a substantial body of amateurs continues to this day inch by inch to fight through the successive battles. Such folk are likely to be excited by refinements in particular details although nothing much has changed in the overall view of the great battles in the last fifty years. For such readers, retelling the story has the fascination of repetitious familiarity. It involves them in an exercise that has interest, capacity for thrill, and the assurance of knowing exactly how it will come out. The ability to display an *expertise* in detail adds to the enjoyment. The Civil War, for the buffs, is a kind of self-contained hobby that justifies itself and requires no deeper explanation.

More important is the significance of the war for a larger group, which also appeared almost at the start but for which recollection of the conflict bore quite a different import. From the 1870's onward in New England and to a lesser extent in the Middle West, the war became an

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element of a significant ritual. Its celebration focused on Decoration Day which became an occasion for mobilizing and displaying the unity and solidarity of many communities in their heroic dead. In the small towns where almost every family had had some direct or indirect connection with the casualties, the memorialization of the war had an almost sacred quality. In a nation committed to nonsectarianism, one in which the desire for religious communion was coming to be displaced by nationalism, a ceremony connected with the war was an opportunity for different kinds of people to draw together, in the shared recollection of their dead. The near ones they had all lost became a binding element in their own lives.

For this large group the war had meaning not as a reality but as a symbol. Its members placed little value on accurate knowledge of the past as such. They wished rather to know the events of the four years of conflict in ways appropriate to the use made of them in community ritual. When there was a conflict between the reality of war and what they wished the symbol to be, the actualities receded and disappeared. More and more the symbol acquired a shape fashioned by the will to believe that the war had been worthy of the communities that survived it.

In time, the symbolic function of the War was generalized to serve a much broader stratum of the whole population. The great conflict which tore the nation apart became a token of national unity as the country moved along the road to reunion between 1865 and the end of the century. Gradually Decoration Day celebrations lost their exclusively northern character; as acrimony diminished it became usual for Confederates and Yankees to commemorate the occasion together. The war became, in retrospect, an experience Americans had shared rather than one that had divided them. Interregional migrations, the growth of national consciousness, and the softening of sectional issues as reconstruction came to a close tended to induce men everywhere to think back upon the war as the mortar that had cemented the fractured union and made it whole again.

Almost at once, the symbolic function of the war distorted men's understanding of what the conflict had been in actuality. The war was transmuted from the bitter conflict it had been into an episode of high adventure. Every base element vanished; only nobility remained, as if those who survived could thus banish the guilt of having failed those who died. Above all, if the war were to bind Americans in national unity, both sides had to seem right. There could be no villains, only heroes. Everyone had been gallant; there had been no winners and no

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losers, only a splendid game from which all had gained. The war had been a great pageant, in which the feats of the worthy ancestors of the people who looked back on it had never been marred by dishonor or betrayal, and which had led to the glorious end of the Union strengthened.

I recall from my childhood a series entitled *The Blue and the Grey*, in which alternate volumes retold the story of the battles on land and sea and in which the cousins on either side—all good—all gained fame with no pain. It is much in that tone that the endless narrations of the past century have celebrated the war. It is the quest for such an affirmation about the character of our past that has created a market for Civil War literature.

One simple and familiar problem will illustrate the subtle distortion of the most important issues of the war. The crisis that followed secession tested men's loyalties. In the South, each citizen had to weigh his obligations to the state against those to the nation; and in border states like Missouri and Tennessee pro-Union and pro-Confederate factions each claimed legitimacy. One might expect that any look backward at the unfolding conflict would yield some understanding of the nature of loyalty. Surely the experience of the Americans who faced great crises of conscience during the opening months of the war was significant; surely it involved decisions with important implications for the relationship of the individual to his political obligations. Yet the whole tenor of the discussion of this issue where the literature touches on it at all, throws a fog of obscurity over the question.

Robert E. Lee, for instance, remains one of the great heroes of American history. He was an officer in the Army of the United States of America; he had certain loyalties to his country. As a Virginian he also had loyalties to his state. Were those loyalties the same, similar, or different in nature? What gave one set greater weight than the other? It is altogether conceivable that Lee should have retained his commission in the Army of the United States as some other Virginians did. Certainly that would not have been an act of disloyalty. But, in fact, of course, he resigned to become a general in the Confederate Army; but he was still not disloyal. In other words, in this case, either decision was good; in such circumstances nobody could act improperly. There was room for all to be loyal.

Yet if we transpose the same issues to the problems of our own time, we expose the falsity of such resolutions. Issues of loyalty demand choices between ways of acting correctly and ways of acting incorrectly; to be-

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lieve that it was possible in 1861 that either decision was equally right is to yield to such delusions as the myth of a unifying war demands.

The Civil War was more than a symbol, more than the basis for the ritual assertion of nationality that the next century would make of it. That conflict lasted four years. It was the first of the great modern wars in which battles were fought in a new and deadly serious way. No longer as in the eighteenth century did exchange of desultory fire for a half-hour precede a wait of another three months before the next battle. Here the soldiers confronted each other in trenches for days on end; and they shot to kill. The toll was monstrous—360,000 dead on the Union side, 258,000 dead on the Confederate side, a stupendous mound of corpses, all American. In addition to uncounted military casualties, civilians were now ruthlessly involved in the suffering. This was Whitman's war, that many-threaded drama with its sudden strange surprises, its confounding of prophecies, its moments of despair, its interminable campaigns, its mighty and cumbersome green armies engaged in bloody battles—with over the whole land an unending universal mourning wail of women, parents, orphans. These formed the untold and unwritten history of the war, infinitely greater than the few scraps and distortions that are ever told or written. Of this war of actuality we know little by contrast with the war as symbol and pagentry about which we are told a great deal.

To draw meaning from the war of actuality it is necessary to ask somewhat different questions. To go beyond the consolatory sequence of familiar events, to discover why the tragic failure of our polity in 1861 is still significant to Americans a century later calls for an altogether different perspective. To regard the war as actuality is less comfortable than to treat it as symbol—but far more enlightening.

The war created a great break in the American past. Yet it was not a single incident, with a single set of causes and results. It involved rather a succession of events one leading to another but by no means linked in a chain of inevitable causality. In retrospect, it appears that the effects of the war grew out of its character, which in turn developed from the federal government's determination to resist secession, which in turn was a product of the way in which the Southern states wished to dissolve the bonds that attached them to the Union. But it did not have to follow that secession would produce the kind of war that was fought or the kind of peace that was the outcome. The particular configuration of forces at each point of decision shaped these developments.

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Furthermore the participants could not in advance envision the relation of their own specific actions to the whole drama. The people who took the initial steps towards secession not only did not anticipate that the war would be fought and lost but they did not even realize fully what secession meant. The border states that remained loyal to the Union at the decisive moment of the war's outbreak could not guess at the consequences; and when the North determined to resist secession it did so without serious calculation of the implications, without a clear image of what was yet to come. The war with all its immense effect upon American life did not come as a single event foreseeable in character; it crept up upon those who were to be involved in it in a succession of incidents which seemed limited in their consequences and which only in their as yet unknown totality would have the cataclysmic effect they did.

An examination of each of those steps must take account not only of the forces that led men to act but also of what the men thought they were doing at the time that they acted. Secession, for instance, acquires a totally different aspect when regarded not in the context of the whole war but from the point of view of the politicians who made that fateful move. They had no glimmer of its results. They were in fact confident that there would be no war; the logic that persuaded them to act as they did rested on the assumption that secession might not remain permanent, and if it did, would be effected peacefully. They were not taking a first step toward war, although war was the consequence of their action. What they did depended on an assumption which proved false—that their withdrawal would have only negligible effects.

A similar miscalculation accounted for the failure of all efforts at compromise in the winter and spring of 1860-1861. Despite the attempts of mediators to bring the wayward states back into the Union, secession became permanent. American politics had been a long history of compromises, going back through those of the 1850's to that of 1820, and beyond that to the Constitutional Convention. But the capacity for compromise now disappeared. For one thing, the very history of compromise betrayed the men of 1861. Many who voted for secession believed that the pattern of 1820 and 1832, of 1850 and 1854 would again be repeated. In time a new compromise would bring them back; secession was a tactic for raising the bargaining price. The very fact that the maneuver of the excessive demand which could be moderated by compromise had repeatedly worked earlier, encouraged the seceders to pursue it once more, at the same time that it also persuaded

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Northerners to resist, also in the expectation of an ultimate peaceful outcome. (The lesson is not altogether inappropriate to 1961.) Whatever the long term effects, we shall not understand the crisis without taking account of the fact that most of the men who were to be drawn into the war did not realize that it would come, but had faith in compromise.

They were wrong not only because some among them did wish to make secession permanent and even were eager to fight, but, more important, because the character of the issue upon which they had this time taken their stands no longer readily permitted postponement. The faith that some adjustment was always possible blinded them to the fact that circumstances had changed radically between 1854 and 1861. The tactics of compromise in the spring of 1861 were hopelessly befogged by the confidence that a settlement was bound to emerge. The men involved in the attempt to secure the enactment of a compromise Constitutional amendment and the delegates to the peace convention held at the invitation of the Virginia legislature in March played at reaching an agreement, as in the past, unaware that their problems were altogether different.

When the two sides met in these final pacific encounters, they discovered they no longer had room for maneuver. The representatives of the South were no longer satisfied with the demands they had made in 1820 or 1850. They sought much broader assurances, and failed to perceive that they could not possibly get what they wanted. For they demanded a mortgage on the future, a permanent ineradicable commitment that there would always be a place for slavery in the Union. They wished to guarantee the stability of the institution where it already existed; they wished to safeguard their property everywhere in the United States; and above all they wished to be sure that slavery could spread to any territories that would thereafter be acquired, in Cuba and other Caribbean areas, or in Mexico.

The demand that the institution not merely be left alone but be protected as it spread was very different from that made in earlier compromises, although few contemporaries understood the difference in more than an intuitive way. Earlier compromises had dealt with limited spaces, with Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, or with the still unsettled parts of the Louisiana territory. The area was circumscribed and, precisely because it had defined boundaries, could be shared. The commitment embraced in any such compromise was measurable and calculable, with the losses involved absorbed as the price of the gains. By contrast the

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claims proffered in 1861 were not specific. They extended on into the indefinite future and bound not only those who agreed but generations without end. Despite the syrupy assurance of some modern historians that the institution of slavery was becoming increasingly benign, any feasible compromise in 1861 would have fastened it irremovably as a burden upon the subsequent development of the Republic. The earnest bargainers of the peace convention saw their delusions dissolve when they recognized that the only alternative to secession was to make slavery the one unchangeable basis of the Constitution, a demand that could not possibly be met by those to whom it was posed.

The efforts to compromise were thus doomed to frustration. The Southerners, beginning with the assumption that they could treat the election of Lincoln as they had earlier instances of disagreement, as leverage for concessions, moved beyond the kind of demands they had formerly made to a kind that the Northerners could not possibly meet. At this point the contending elements discovered, to their surprise, the unyielding opposition of the antagonist. It took a long time for people in the South to absorb the shock; down through March, and even into April, to the firing on Fort Sumter, many who should have known, and who might have influenced the course of events had they known, still believed that somehow there would be an accommodation, that the issue would dissolve in some harmonious adjustment that would restore normal relations between the two sections of the country. The war was upon them before they knew it.

The persistent faith in compromise also distorted the decision that confronted the border states. Since they were unwilling to face the fact that there might actually be a permanent division of the nation, their crisis of choice was postponed until a state of war actually existed. The issue actually posed to them therefore was not one of whether a sectional division was to their interest or not, but rather of what the appropriate stance might be in a civil war. That is, they had to weigh not only the potential gains and losses to social and economic orders in which slavery still existed, but also political loyalties. Sharp polarizations of opinion therefore split sections, communities and families.

The loyalties on which men acted in the border states were shaped by their attitudes toward the government under which they lived. The issue in almost all cases was determined by the way in which they interpreted loyalty. Some tended to think of loyalty in terms of their obligations to a particular group, the decisions of which were binding upon their own actions. Others interpreted loyalty in terms of obligations to

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a political process which had a paramount claim on their obedience, however that claim might affect them as individuals or as members of particular groups. More usually than not, when the time came to decide in Maryland or Missouri, men felt the conflicting pulls of attachment to their local communities which recognized slavery and tied them to the South, and of faithfulness to a republican process of government. This situation could not have been anticipated during the conventions that divided the Democratic Party, nor during the election, nor even during the secession movement. It became clear only with the onset of war.

The slowly unfolding perspective of what was to come also shaped the decisions of northern men. Those who voted for Lincoln had no glimmer of what the consequences would be. Even after it became apparent that compromise was no longer feasible, that secession would be permanent and that the border states would divide on the subject, war did not seem the inevitable result. It was more usual in the North to urge that the wayward sisters be allowed to depart in peace. And such an eventuality was altogether conceivable. No absolute calculus of alternatives informed Northerners that they would suffer more by the dissolution of the Union than by the conflict necessary to preserve it. Indeed, a muted sense of doubt survived through the years of fighting. In any case, in the spring of 1861 there was no discernible consciousness that what would transpire had to transpire.

The persistence of the North in attempting to restore the Union had other causes which can best be understood as they impinged on the tragic and brooding figure of Lincoln. He too had not known in the November of his election what the outcome would be; he had shown no more foresight than others in dealing with the efforts at compromise; and he was no better prepared for the kind of war that would come than were any of his contemporaries. In this great crisis, as he considered the issues before him and the nation, he could fasten on to but one guide to conduct; and as events approached their climax his thinking narrowed ever more on this single consideration, which he described as preservation of the Union. The phrase, as he used it, had a complex meaning. It connoted for him not simply the antithesis of secession, but the totality of procedures of orderly government which alone made the Republic viable. Lincoln's career had been that of a politician and a lawyer who lived by mediation, by the arrangement of settlements within the rules of the game. No doubt as the months went by after his election, he continued to hope that some agreement would take form; and after his inauguration he still drifted indecisively on the chance that the hope would be realized.

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But he remained a stickler on one point—the inviolability of the rules. He was willing to concede much on the future of the slave in the South; he was willing to negotiate the question of the territories, on which he might have taken a less rigid stand than did the Republican Party platform. But he simply could not yield to Southern demands without jeopardizing the future of republican government. If the determined resistance and the threat of secession by a minority could frustrate permanently the clearly and constitutionally expressed will of the majority, then there would be no rules and no game, but only an endless succession of stalemates as rival groups checked one another. Yet Lincoln saw no clear way, within the rules he respected, of coercing the seceded states. He fastened therefore on the legalism of non-recognition, until the shots at Fort Sumter left him no alternative to action.

Other Northerners followed Lincoln's course of decision. They voted and reacted to secession without perceiving the whole chain of consequences. The failures of the compromise effort convinced them that they could not now give way before the pressures of the South and still preserve the processes of orderly government. Yet they did not know the war would come until it was upon them.

Even then, even when the Confederacy resolved to erase the blemish on its sovereignty in Charleston and even when the North determined to resist, even then it was not at all certain that the war would be the kind of war it actually was. That it would be fought with bitterness and passion and immense destruction was not known to the participants who set it in motion. The forces that ultimately gave the struggle its character only emerged after it had begun. Altogether apart from the technological advances that maximized the power to inflict damage, the war was marked by a will to kill and destroy that significantly reflected the mood of those who fought.

Later, almost ironically but not consciously so, people referred to this as the brothers' war. The hatreds expressed in it had the intensity one would expect in people close enough to understand each other and to dislike what necessity made them do to one another. Perhaps savagery was their only means of displacing the full blame upon the others.

In 1884, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. attempted to describe the meaning of the war in which he had himself participated. His generation had been set apart, touched by fire, stimulated to a capacity for emotion and feeling. As a result of the war, "it was given us to learn at the outset that life is a profound and passionate thing." In this address, Holmes reversed the order and the causal relation of his impressions. Passion

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was not, as he thought, the product of war, but rather the war acquired its character from the unrecognized passions men brought into it. The men who passed through the fields littered with the dead were not learning to feel. They felt. And what they felt was the blinding need to obliterate the enemy who was none other than the brother-betrayer. It is a misreading of their experience not to recognize that in the four years of war millions of Americans really hated one another and really wanted to kill one another and that the drama they acted out on the battlefields was less one of gallantry and courage than of hatred.

Therefore, the war which settled such incidental questions as the scope of state's rights could not settle the important problems that divided the nation in 1860, neither of the future of Negroes nor of the kind of society that the United States would become. These issues remained to trouble the country for decades to come.

There remained also a great pain, among those whose homes vanished, whose husbands, brothers and sons returned with the crippling souvenirs of the battlefields or did not return at all; and more important a great pain among all those who survived to see what the war had done to their Republic.

Those who lived on could give themselves no true account of the meaning of the war without admitting the dismaying frustrations of the great hopes they had held in the 1840's and 1850's. This was the generation nurtured in the spirit of Emersonian optimism, taught to believe in the innate goodness of men, in indefinite progress, and in the capacity of human reason to recreate the world in an ideal image. Their faith had been involved in the war in a way that few understood; and the war really meant the failure of that faith. That was why, as the decade of the 1860's came to a close, many Americans began to turn their backs on the actuality of what the war had been, and began instead to seek in it a symbol of that which alone they had saved from the experience, their national unity. In an earlier passage of his memorial address, Holmes had put the matter bluntly. Memorial Day was "a national act of enthusiasm and faith." It embodied "our belief that to act with enthusiasm and faith is the condition of acting greatly." "To fight out a war you must believe something." More than that "you must be willing to commit yourself to a course . . . without being able to foresee exactly where you will come out."

In that sense the men of the North and of the South seized upon the war as a symbol. But in doing so, they grotesquely distorted the actuality of the war as it had been. And the continued preservation of that symbol also obscures the surviving problems left by the war.

Kenneth Pitchford

THE MINISTER

"Look where you've stopped the car," she laughed and pointed to the church across from them. The bleary lieutenant belched and leaned across the seat. "They never lock the doors. The minister who confirmed me died just a year after. But that was years ago."

She had been first to point out his resemblance to the Gabriel in the stained-glass annunciation, on the pulpit's left. Everyone agreed the profiles matched, but when the new minister's full face leaned above them, resemblance vanished.

His brows grew together, as no angel's should; the backs of his hands were blurred by clouds of hair, and a wisp or two curled upward to surmount even the crisp white circle about his neck.

Her father himself had hardly so dense a beard.

She recalled too well her troubled audience.

"It's not just my father don't believe," (her tears obscuring how the hair on his hands and brow grew beaded as they talked in the drafty chancel) "but that my angels don't come back no more."

Lieutenant, minister, both seemed the same to her now, the once on a darkening Friday in black vestment, here at two a.m. by moonlight. "Why not go in a minute with me? I want to see if it's still the same." The lieutenant laughed and followed.

Inside, the dark shapes in the glass grew clear after a minute's peering. Dazed faces stared above her in profile as they had in childhood. "They had so much more color then," she said as the soldier's moist hands searched and tugged until she lay on the chancel carpet where she saw, turned upside down, her gray annunciation.

Early Longfellow

A READER WHO was familiar with Longfellow's boyhood poems, and who opened *Voices of the Night*, would have been struck very soon, surely, by the tones of a new voice:

I heard the trailing garments of the Night
Sweep through her marble halls!
I saw her sable skirts all fringed with light
From the celestial walls!

One need not share Poe's exaggerated opinion of these lines—"No poem ever opened with a beauty more august"—to be aware at once of a firmness of tone, a boldness in attack, a freshness of image, that one would have found nowhere among the juvenilia. And as this imagined reader moved through the poem, with its fine prosopopoeia of Night as a majestic, even mythic, female figure, its delicate rhythmic effects, and its language of alleviation; as he came to the last stanza—

Peace! Peace! Orestes-like I breathe this prayer!
Descend with broad-winged flight,
The welcome, the thrice-prayed for, the most fair,
The best-beloved Night!—

with its beautiful literary reminiscence—he would surely have felt that he was hearing the voice of a far more mature and a far more distinguishable literary artist. Not that the poem is perfect: there is a difficulty, to the visual imagination, in reconciling the "marble halls" in which Night dwells, with the "celestial walls" by the light from which her skirts are fringed. But the flaws are observable only on a second look, and one's first sense is of the sustained and hymnic character of the whole.

The poem indeed is called "Hymn to the Night"—Longfellow cannot not have known Novalis's "Hymns to the Night"—and the little volume is pervaded, as its title promises, by this nocturnal symbolism.

This article is a chapter from a work in progress, a critical biography of Longfellow, and deals with his first five volumes of short poems.

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There had been an anticipation of this in one or two of the boyish poems—

Here rest the weary oars!—soft airs
Breathe out in the o'erarching sky;
And Night—sweet Night—serenely wears
A smile of peace: her noon is nigh.

But only now is the presence of Night so pervasive as to become a kind of signature:

The night is come, but not too soon . . .
When the hours of Day are numbered,
And the voices of the Night
Wake the better soul, that slumbered,
To a holy, calm delight . . .
. . . That a midnight host of spectres pale
Beleaguered the walls of Prague.

The author of these poems was always to be, in one of his roles, a poet of the Night, or the Twilight; Night was to have for him an emotional value that the day never quite had. It is not that it ever signified to him the profoundly religious meaning it had for Novalis, or the philosophical meaning it had for Hölderlin, or the bitter connotations it had for Poe. Only rarely is it the setting, as it is in "The Beleaguered City," for the spectral and the menacing. Almost always it brings thoughts, as it does in "Hymn to the Night," of repose, assuagement, release from care. At moments one discerns a longing for unconsciousness, even oblivion, in this poet, that runs strangely counter to other reaches of his feeling.

So strong a wish as this is seldom expressed, but one finds it explicit in such a poem as "Curfew," the last poem—a kind of envoi—in *The Belfry of Bruges*. The short, heavy, two-stressed lines of "Curfew" have a weary and tolling music like that of the curfew-bell itself:

Dark grow the windows,
And quenched is the fire;
Sound fades into silence,—
All footsteps retire.

The closing of a book, forgetfulness of its contents, and the chilling of the hearth-stone—these follow; and then:

Darker and darker
The black shadows fall;
Sleep and oblivion
Reign over all.

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It is not always, as it is here, the utter unconsciousness of sleep that is invoked, but it is almost always a release from "the cares that infest the day." This is the theme of another poem in the same volume, "The Day is Done"; a poem that, in its tone, its cadences, its imagery, has almost the air of a translation from the German:

The day is done, and the darkness
Falls from the wings of Night . . .

The poet, in his "sadness and longing"—his *Traurigkeit* and his *Sehnsucht*, so to say—confesses that he wishes a simple lay to be read to him

That shall soothe this restless feeling,
And banish the thoughts of day.

The poems of the great masters resemble too much "the strains of martial music"; they suggest

Life's endless toil and endeavor;
And to-night I long for rest.

This piece was originally a proem to Longfellow's anthology, *The Walf*, the selections in which are mostly of the simple and undisturbing sort he calls for in "The Day Is Done"; but the poem has a modest authenticity of its own in its linking of Night and the thought of rest. And even when the nocturnal is absent, in these volumes, the strain of the elegiac is likely to be audible. It is audible in one of the most successful pieces in *Ballads and Other Poems*, a piece that Hawthorne understandably liked, "The Goblet of Life." The central metaphor here is that of the fennel that wreathes and crowns the cup of existence: bitter as its taste is, when its leaves are pressed into the waters of the cup, it imparts to them a power that, in our darkness and distress, gives "new light and strength." Much of Longfellow's misery during these years must have dictated this curiously astringent poem; the endurance, not the joy, of life is what it enforces:

I pledge you in this cup of grief,
Where floats the fennel's bitter leaf!
The Battle of our Life is brief,
The alarm,—the struggle,—the relief,
Then sleep we side by side.

He rarely comes so close to harshness, to an almost Hardy-esque harshness, as he does in this poem; but the minor key in which many of these

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poems are written suggests the plaintive nocturnes of some romantic composer. Nothing could be more characteristic of him, on this side, than the melancholy imagery, in "Afternoon in February," of closing day, a frozen marsh, a dead river, clouds like ashes, snowfall recommencing, and a funeral train passing slowly through the meadows as one hears the dismal pealing of a funeral bell.

There is no wildness of terror or fierceness of anger in this melancholy of Longfellow's, as there is in Poe's or Melville's, and no such dull and continuous pain as he himself saw in Hawthorne's; at its most acute, it never goes beyond a bearable despondency. It could be described as romantic nostalgia of the less passionate and rebellious sort, but it is as far as possible from being a mere literary convention; it was as inherent in Longfellow's temperament as a similar vein of feeling was in, say, Heine's—without the recoil of irony. His sensibilities were tenderer, more vulnerable, more exposed to injury than most men's; and the inevitable strains of existence—bereavement, frustration, or just "causeless" dejection—told on him, especially in these years, with a sharpness that was bound to reflect itself, now and then, in his work.

There was never a time, however, when Longfellow was willing, as some greater and some lesser writers have been, to yield himself wholly to the evidence of his sensibilities and make a coherent world-view out of his miseries. His aversion to the tragic was as temperamental as his sensitiveness to pain, and as all mankind knows, or once knew, he insisted from the outset on correcting—one might say, on contradicting—the evidence of his sensibilities by opposing to it a doctrine of earnest struggle, of courageous resolution, of cheerful and productive action. He was encouraged in this by what he had made, morally, of his reading in Goethe—

Wer immer strebend sich bemüht
Den können wir erlösen—*

but if he simplified and diluted what he found in Goethe, as he certainly did, he by no means debased or falsified it. His resolute hopefulness is quite as genuine as his melancholy, only it is the product not of spontaneous emotion but of conscious effort and self-discipline. Perhaps it is expressed most acceptably in "The Light of Stars," one of the two or three better poems in *Voices of the Night*. He confesses here that in his breast, as in the night, there is no light but a cold and starry one, and

*Who'er aspires unweariedly
Is not beyond redeeming.

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especially the light of "the red planet Mars," to which he declares he is giving the first watch of the night. Mars, cold as he may be, is the planet of heroic action, and the poet is determined to accept that stern influence:

The star of the unconquered will,
He rises in my breast,
Serene, and resolute, and still,
And calm, and self-possessed.

"The Light of Stars" was never one of Longfellow's extravagantly popular pieces, perhaps because there is too nice a balance in it between the confession of suffering and the voice of the resisting will. There was no such balance—and no such expressive metaphor—in "A Psalm of Life," or "The Village Blacksmith," or "Excelsior"; and the slack commonplace of these inferior pieces insured their universal currency for many decades.

They had the appeal of poems that enforce "lessons"—it is Longfellow's own word—and they have repelled more exacting readers, from Poe onward, by their explicit and elementary moralizing. To Poe this meant, as we have seen, that Longfellow's conception of the aims of poetry was "*all wrong*"; that he was utterly mistaken in supposing that the Didactic was a legitimate province for the poet. Poe himself, of course, is all wrong here; there is no reason whatever why the didactic should be ruled out of serious poetry; it has an ancient and august derivation, and freely enough understood, is a powerful element in much of our contemporary verse. The real objections to Longfellow's didacticism are of another sort. One of them, as Poe was the first but not the last to point out, is that stylistically the lesson is often appended to the poem instead of being implied by it—appended with what Howells called Longfellow's "quaint doubt of the reader." Even more importantly, Longfellow's moralizing poems fail, either wholly or relatively, because he was not a moralist. His gifts were quite different from that. Nothing—to repeat—could be more sincere than his moral convictions, but they are at second hand; they were not the fruit—as Emerson's, for example, were—of solitary and independent cogitation. He lived by them, as many men have lived by truths they have learned from others; but honorable as they are, they have no intrinsic intellectual interest, and they do nothing for his poetry but enfeeble it. All this is only too evident.

Longfellow was obeying a truer instinct when he turned to the equally popular, but for him less treacherous, form of the ballad or short ballad-like poem. He had a strain of the genuine folk-poet in his make-up

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—in his unaffected naïveté, his simplicity of heart and mind, his love of rapid and usually pathetic story-telling, and his power of improvisation; for some of these poems were written with as little effort as a folk-singer puts into a new ballad on an old and familiar kind of subject. Hackneyed as it is, "The Wreck of the Hesperus" could hardly be surpassed as a literary imitation of the border ballad—for if the subject is native, the style is a perfect pastiche of the English or Scottish popular ballad, of "Sir Patrick Spens" or "The Wife of Usher's Well." It is a poem for the young, of course, without an under-feeling of any sort, but it has in it, on its boyish level, the authentic terror of the sea. So, too, has the equally familiar "The Skeleton in Armor," which is a little triumph of seaworthy narrative verse; the stanza, borrowed from Drayton, plunges ahead with the speed of a vessel in a favoring wind, and the wintry imagery of Northern lands and seas is full of romantic charm—the gleam of the Northern lights, the half-frozen sound, the stars shining on the dark Norway pines, the horsemen drawing up on the white sea-strand, the vessel beating to sea in a wild hurricane. The sea as both a mysterious attraction and a bitter peril is as much Longfellow's as it is Melville's, superior as Melville is in power; and a good poem like "Sir Humphrey Gilbert" has the presence in it of the sinister icebergs one recalls from Melville's grimmer poem, "The Berg." The "secret" in another vigorous piece, "The Secret of the Sea"—suggested by a Spanish ballad—is that "Only those who brave its dangers / Comprehend its mystery!"

Few poets—as so many readers, including Kipling, have felt—have had a stronger sense of the sea than Longfellow; and the best poems in *The Seaside and the Fireside*, for the most part, are the poems in the section, "By the Seaside," to which both "Sir Humphrey Gilbert" and "The Secret of the Sea" belong. The longest of these is "The Building of the Ship." One regrets that this poem, like some others of Longfellow's, was staled and shopworn almost from the beginning by constant use in school readers and in youthful recitation, for, flawed as it is by some of Longfellow's habitual faults—the too explicit political moral of the coda and the too facile family sentiment of one or two passages—it has, to a robust taste that can overlook these faults, a vivacity, a swiftness of movement, and a painterly concreteness of detail, as in an old-fashioned genre painting or print, that save it from simple banality. The building and the launching of a sailing-vessel—what artisan's activity could have had less of the lifelessness of a merely literary symbol for Longfellow, with his memories of a boyhood in Portland surrounded by shipyards and stocks?

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To be sure, "The Building of the Ship," as has often been pointed out, owes its particular form to the example of Schiller; "The Song of the Bell" was its literary model. A workmanly process is the unifying symbol in both poems, bell-casting or shipbuilding; and a master workman is the dominant figure in both. Longfellow's political moral also, the celebration of national union, is not unlike Schiller's, the celebration of civil orderliness. But if his poem is less a bravura piece than the German poem, if it is metrically less glittering, it is free from that strain of *bürgerlich* smugness, of rather crass domestic comfort-worship and political stuffiness, that hangs so heavily over Schiller's piece. Longfellow's earnest Unionism seems relatively tonic and open-aired, and even his sentimental domesticity—the love of the young workman and the Master's daughter—has a kind of innocence that keeps it inoffensive. "The Building of the Ship," moreover, has a metrical animation of its own, with its hurrying lines of irregular length, its tossing rhythms, and its freely-falling rhymes.

The charm of the poem derives largely from the vividness of the tangible objects and activities in it. It is what Whitman would call a Song for Occupations, or rather for one Occupation, and it abounds in the materials of construction—the graceful model the Master builds, the timbers he assembles from a dozen regions (chestnut, elm, oak, and "The knarred and crooked cedar knees"), the keel of the ship stretched along the blocks, and its strong skeleton as it gradually emerges ("Stemson and keelson and sternson-knee"). Almost as in Whitman, one hears the sound of axes and mallets plied "with vigorous arms," and sees and smells the columns of smoke that wreath upward from the boiling and bubbling caldron, overflowing with black tar, "heated for the sheathing." A little later one sees the rudder ready to be set in place ("With oaken brace and copper band"), the cunningly carved figure-head, the tall and tapering masts, and the slender spars. In his less intense way, Longfellow had something of Whitman's love for his "faithful solids and fluids."

He had also, what is not so characteristic of Whitman, the sense of the ghostly; "phantom" is one of his favorite words, and the ghostly is often associated for him with the idea of the sea. The lines about the future service of the figurehead have his signature all over them:

On many a dreary and misty night,
'Twill be seen by the rays of the signal light,
Speeding along through the rain and the dark,
Like a ghost in its snow-white sark,

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The pilot of some phantom bark,
Guiding the vessel, in its flight,
By a path none other knows aright!

The tone of the poem as a whole is hearty and confident; it is a daylight poem; but a passage like this, conveying the sense of night and mystery, saves it from an inartistic monotony of effect. The actual building of the ship may be an emblem for Longfellow of cheerful productive effort generally, as it is also for the building of the American Union in particular; but that vigorous motive is at least momentarily counterpointed by the image of the spectral vessel in its flight. To one or two generations the poem may have been tediously familiar, but it deserves not to be wholly forgotten.

So, too, do two or three short pieces in "By the Seaside," besides those already mentioned; the group as a whole indicates how much Longfellow's art, on its own level, had matured and refined itself in the ten years since *Voices of the Night*. The least-forgotten of these poems, "Seaweed," to be sure, is another flawed success. There is real enough energy in the way in which the oceanic tempest is conjured up in the opening stanzas—the Atlantic storm-wind driving the surges, laden with seaweed, upon the land, and then subsiding again until the drifting currents have found repose—but, as so often, the easy symbolism of the storm-wind as a type of the poet's wild emotion is far too heavily enforced in the succeeding stanzas; and, as someone has remarked, the seaweed itself is not a very fortunate symbol of the poet's songs. No such objection can be brought against "Chrysaor," which has the kind of purity and perfection that a tiny master-work can achieve. Saintsbury thought it the most Browningsque poem of Longfellow's, though, if so, it is not the muscular but the serene Browning of whom one might be reminded. The poem enforces no reflection whatever, but simply, with a curious calm magic, summons up the image of a refulgent star rising at twilight out of the sea like the hero Chrysaor leaving the arms of his beloved Callirrhoe—"forever tender, soft, and tremulous." If the poem suggests Browning, it suggests even more strongly, with its lovely unhackneyed myth, some chastely-wrought poem in the Greek Anthology.

The star in this poem rises over a perfectly tranquil sea. The treacherous and tempestuous sea, on the other hand, lurks in the background of "The Fire of Drift-Wood": the drift-wood that is burning on the hearth has come from "the wreck of stranded ships," and it is made to express, but quietly and without strain, the wreckage of the friendship that has formerly united the host and his callers. No note is forced in

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the poem: the scene in the parlor of the old farm-house near the port is evoked without apparent effort—the sea-breeze blowing damp and cold through the windows, the glimpses of the lighthouse and the dismantled fort beyond, the darkness of twilight gradually settling in the room until the faces fade from sight and the gloom is broken only by the voices of host and guests. They speak of an unrecallable past, of what has been but also of what might have been, and of

The first slight swerving of the heart,
That words are powerless to express,
And leave it still unsaid in part,
Or say it with too great excess.

Few poems of Longfellow's have more the character of a small drama, and one composed of materials so apparently slight and evanescent that they might seem to defy expression. The last stanza, as Howard Nemerov has said, "exactly resolves the elements of the poem, and does so without any gorgeous or spectacular fussing":

O flames that glowed! O hearts that yearned!
They were indeed too much akin,
The drift-wood fire without that burned,
The thoughts that burned and glowed within.

Much of Longfellow's shorter verse rises out of purely personal sources—out of private springs of feeling and mood—and much of it, too, rises out of his love of story and legend. This does not mean that he was not capable of what has been called Public Speech, that he was untouched by public issues or unmoved by public wrongs. He was far from being a Shelley, a Hugo, a Whitman; but he was a representative American liberal of his generation, hopeful, humane, generous, and idealistic; and there were impersonal "political" questions that for him were productive of vivid personal emotion. "The Building of the Ship" is, as we have seen, a kind of political poem, and if we can recapture in imagination the ardent nationalism it expressed we shall not be surprised to learn how deeply Lincoln was affected by it when it was recited to him early in the War.

As strong as his patriotism, however, and sometimes in uneasy relation to it, was Longfellow's pacifism. There was a kind of "ambivalence" here, it is true, in his emotions. For all his personal mildness, Longfellow as a man of imagination was quite capable of being stirred and even, in a sense, pleased by the spectacle of violence; there was a strain in him

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of General Wadsworth or of his uncles in the Navy, and the warlike was not quite simply repellent to him. At the other pole, however, his hatred of violence, his love of the peaceful and the gentle, was even stronger and more characteristic; and he had persuaded himself wishfully, though with a benevolence one must respect, that the barbarous days of war and bloodshed were over, or that at least they were rapidly approaching their historic end.

The early forties, so long after Waterloo and our own War of 1812, were no doubt propitious to such convictions, and Longfellow made them the theme of three poems, two of which appeared in *The Belfry of Bruges* and the third in *The Seaside*. The most familiar of the three, "The Arsenal at Springfield," is but half-successful if only because the anti-war theme is developed so fully in direct rhetorical terms. Yet the poem takes off from a fine simile—the burnished gun-barrels in the Arsenal rising to the ceiling like the pipes of a huge and ominous organ—and even if it is true that the comparison began by being Fanny Longfellow's, not her husband's, Longfellow knew well what to make of it. The poem has a real force, partly because the four-line stanza is managed with such easy mastery and the feminine a-rhymes are so curiously expressive here; partly too because, in his associative way, Longfellow conjures up his horrid imagery of warfare with an imaginative conviction that makes war and peace seem to be in genuine tension with each other:

On helm and harness rings the Saxon hammer,
Through Cimbric forests roars the Norseman's song,
And loud, amid the universal clamor,
O'er distant deserts sounds the Tartar gong.

There is a similar tension, but in its terms a finer one, in "The Occultation of Orion," another pacifist piece. Myth and astronomy together are endowed with a kind of grandeur here that one misses in the other poem; the constellation Orion is made the symbol of barbaric violence, but it is a splendid violence:

Begin with many a blazing star,
Stood the great giant Algebar,
Orion, hunter of the beast!
His sword hung gleaming at his side,
And, on his arm, the lion's hide
Scattered across the midnight air
The golden radiance of his hair.

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To counter this warlike metaphor Longfellow finds two metaphors of peace and harmony, the seven-stringed lyre of Pythagoras that, towering from earth to the fixed stars, symbolizes the harmonious music of the spheres, and the serene moon that, as it moves silently across the sky, "occults" or blots out—in a manner that Longfellow knew to be bad astronomy—the constellation of the great hunter:

And suddenly from his outstretched arm
Down fell the red skin of the lion
Into the river at his feet.

Peace and harmony have triumphed over violence, and the strings of the heavenly lyre, echoing a burst of angelic music, proclaim that

"Forevermore, forevermore,
The reign of violence is o'er!"

Again the theme is made explicit, but it is made so in a more dramatic and less oratorical manner than in the other poem, and it is not a fatal blemish. How fine, moreover, is the sense of radiance and harmony that, by language and imagery, Longfellow calls out in this poem!

The third of these pieces, "Tegnér's Drapa," is a threnody on the Swedish poet, Esaias Tegnér, the mad bishop of Vexjö, whom Longfellow so much admired—excessively, no doubt—and whose pious poem, "The Children of the Lord's Supper," he had translated, as well as passages from his more masculine *Frithiof's Saga*. With its unrhymed lines, irregular in length, and its mythic echoes of the Prose Edda—for Longfellow identifies Tegnér with the slain god Balder—"Tegnér's Drapa" has a certain flavor of the archaic versification and the heathen melancholy of Icelandic poetry, but the flavor is faint at best, and after several rather fine stanzas, the poem trails off in a too-obvious and simplistic inculcation of the pacifist moral.

There is nothing comparable to "The Occultation," or even to "The Arsenal," in Longfellow's other contribution to the political muse, the little group of anti-slavery poems. They are too largely the product of his conscious and conscientious will, too little the product of his whole nature, to carry full conviction; and in some of them—"The Quadroon Girl," for example—he falls into a deplorable vein of theatrical sentiment that betrays the unreality of his inspiration. His touch is surer when he can rely on association and picture, as in "The Slave's Dream," though even this piece does not rise much above the level of good verse for school readers and recitation. Yet Longfellow's hatred of chattel

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slavery was as strong as any such bitter emotion could be to a man of his disposition, and two of these poems communicate it with a certain eloquence. "The Warning," part of which is lifted from his old Phi Beta Kappa poem, makes rather convincing use of the figure of Samson, shorn and blinded and bound, but a menace to the temple of the commonweal; and in "The Witnesses" the vision of the sunken slave-ships on the ocean floor, with their freight of fettered skeletons, has an even greater rhetorical force. But Longfellow had little of the Old Testament wrath in his nature that makes some things of Milton's, and even of Whittier's, vibrate with so contagious a rhetoric; and he did well never to repeat the manner of *Poems on Slavery*.

It goes without saying, now, that there is much in these five volumes that is facile and flaccid; like most minor poets who have been prolific as well as minor, Longfellow had no clear sense of the distinction between his weaknesses and his real strength. He seems to have taken as much pleasure in some of his inferior poems as in the better ones; he thought "Maidenhood" and "Excelsior" "perhaps as good as anything I have written"; and certainly he published only what he himself thought was worthy of him. His nature was so genuinely sensitive, gentle, and *gefühlvoll* that, with the best conscience in the world, he could fall a victim to the bad sentimental taste of his age; and there were subjects that normally betrayed him into the sort of false and misplaced feeling that one finds in Lydia Hunt Sigourney. One of these subjects was childhood ("To a Child"); he is almost always at his feeblest on this theme. Another treacherous subject for him was that of innocence or simple unstained purity ("Maidenhood"); one need not make light of this virtue in order to find Longfellow's celebration of it painfully wanting in moral complexity or edge. Death, too, often inspired in him a soft and second-rate emotional response, not a tragic one ("Footsteps of Angels"); and the fact that he shared this weakness with greater writers of the age—Dickens, Tennyson, and others—does not conduce to greater patience with him.

Both morally and artistically speaking, when such subjects are in question, there is something suspect in emotions that well up so easily as these do, and that express themselves with so little stress or struggle. In general, it was a double-natured gift that the gods bestowed on Longfellow when, as it were in his cradle, they endowed him with the talents of an improvisator. On the one hand, this gift was what enabled him, at his best, to write with a fluency, a speed, and a translucency that are

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appropriate to his subjects and fully expressive of them. On the other hand, when he is at his second-best or his worst, the gift was clearly a fatal one: "the weakness of his genius," as Paul Elmer More said, "... was an absence of resistance"; and when thoughts or feelings sprang up in him that needed to be resisted, he gave them as free a rein as the thoughts or feelings that could safely be trusted. The almost effortless rapidity with which some of his successful poems were composed did them no injury, but a similar rapidity helps to account for the failure of some others. If "The Wreck of the Hesperus" came into his mind not by lines but by stanzas, this, given the subject, was as it should have been; and many years later "The Saga of King Olaf" lost nothing of its quality through being composed, most of it, in little more than a fortnight. If, on the other hand, the dramatic poem, *Judas Maccabaeus*, on so difficult a subject, got itself written in eleven days, that fact helps to account for its disappointingness.

For these reasons, and others, one could wish away perhaps half the poems of Longfellow's Harvard years. The rest, unequal as they may be in excellence, are worth preserving in some ideal anthology of verse of the second order. There are states of feeling that remain this side of either ecstasy or despair—mournfulness, regret, elation, the simple apprehension of beauty—that Longfellow could express with a veracity that has nothing in it of falseness or the meretricious. Moods of the weather, seasons of the year, divisions of the day or night—to these external states he was delicately sensitive, and they often become the beautiful equivalents of his emotions. The physical *element* of his imagination, as Gaston Bachelard would say, was water, not fire or air, and the sea was for him a symbol that, in its allurements and its menace, had the primordial power of a symbol in a dream. He had a genius for narrative poetry—not, to be sure, of the psychologically or philosophically complex sort, but in the popular and romantic sense—and he could almost always draw, to happy effect, on legend or literary tradition. His sense of form was fallible, but at his best he is an accomplished, sometimes an exquisite, craftsman, like a master in some minor art, a silversmith or a potter; and his command of his materials—language, imagery, metre, rhyme—though it is not that of a major artist, is wholly adequate to his modest purposes. It remains to be seen what he could make of larger and more ambitious forms, especially that of poetic drama.

Joanne Childers

THE POST-OFFICE

Hot with the sleep of mutterings
Is the oak-tree dark with moss like rain,
And spreading its shade like giant wings
Over the crooked gone-wrong shack
Where the mail comes through the window pane.

Back of the mail bags, cool in the shop,
Behind the counter colored mix
Arrays the shelves, the dripping pop
Is advertised, and out in front
The smeary jars hold sugary sticks.

Noon-high the odors ripe in the store
Rise in the sprouts of beans and berries,
And sunk in the barrels by the door
The cucumbers heighten. Benched out front
The old men sit as verities

And watch the hot mail train go through,
Shimmering into a blurred advance,
Hurtling cinders into the blue
Like warm red stars, and the shadowy eyes
Of the old men blink with forgotten chance.

Pensioners, they mind the mail
And rise to collect it by and by
In the weathered hut while the lit caboose
Of a red tail-light fades out they sit
Sunk eyed and do not wonder why.

James Hayford

THE PRINCIPLE IS GROWTH

Of moving immobility
The model is a tree.
Compliance, fixity,
The tree has both.
The principle is growth.
The essence is to live,
To stay put and yet give,
To sway and still not snap—
And what it takes is blood or sap.

Fred Stern

REFUGEE

Behind the ticking wattles of his eyes
the cackling sound that cracks his drying throat
the fingers trembling in the early breeze
and legs so stiff a stick must tap the way,
some life goes on.

His mind is busy handing out the past
like faded snapshots from a shoddy film.
There is a winter on the Riga ice,
a dog, smoked fish and dripping candles
to linger on.

It will be easy for him in the end
some winter morning in the shallow sun
when warmth is promised to the freezing earth
a wave of cold will rise within his shell
and sweep him on.

REPORTS FROM ABROAD

Theatre in France: Summer Impressions

Henry Popkin

RETURNING TO FRANCE after less than a year's absence* has one great drawback: one has no basis for sentimentalizing about how things have changed. The theatres, the restaurants, the monuments, the newspapers and periodicals, even one's old friends, even the General and the Algerian War—all are exactly as one left them. If changes had taken place, I was not there long enough to probe the reality behind the unchanging façade.

I returned to Europe at the end of May; I came back home at the end of July. I spent most of my time pursuing the theatre through Europe, in London, Vienna, Berlin, Paris, Marseilles, and Avignon. I kept returning to France, but, following a weird schedule of my own making, I never stayed very long at one stretch. I built my schedule around certain inevitabilities—attending the International Theatre Institute in Vienna, catching the Berliner Ensemble before it closed in Berlin, catching Roger Planchon's company during its few days in Marseilles, meeting a lecturing engagement in Hamburg. And so I was dashing in and out of France, often timing my visits to Paris to coincide with the more important events at the Théâtre des Nations.

My peculiar schedule made it impossible for me to follow political or literary events very consecutively. Of course, the Algerian situation gets worse and worse; even if it does not deteriorate in any obvious political or military way, the mere fact of its continuation makes it progressively worse. But signs of deterioration are highly tangible and not only academic. The Right now competes with the Algerians in exploding bombs. With commendable loyalty, each side reserves its bombs for its own. Algerian terrorists have always confined themselves to bombing other Algerians. Perhaps they were following the principle established by Graham Greene in *Our Man in Havana*, that certain unfortunates are inevitably marked out for torture and terrorism and that certain others are raised above those threats by social class or nationality. Possibly that is only another way of saying that they were exacting contributions from

* Mr. Popkin's report is a sequel to his "A Year of French Politics and Theatre," which appeared in the last issue of MR.

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Algerians in France to keep the war going. But the terrorists of the Right should be supplied at once with copies of Greene's "entertainment." They are not playing the game. I think of a Yiddish phrase, which, losing practically nothing in the translation, means: "A person could get killed." The Right has been exploding its bombs in swank residential districts and near government buildings. Perhaps they have been after traitors to their class, the Franklin Roosevelts of France, or perhaps they have been trying to overturn the economy by scaring tourists away. More likely, they have undertaken the most obvious method of influencing those who make decisions.

The extremes are getting further and further apart. I mean the three extremes—Left, Right, and de Gaulle. On the Left, the tone of such a weekly as *L'Express* becomes more and more angry. Some of that alteration is effected by the presence of a column by the editor, Servan-Schreiber, replacing the notes that used to be contributed to the back page by the conservative François Mauriac. And on the Right, the attempted *coups* become increasingly serious. The colleague who did not listen to the radio speech with which de Gaulle put down the revolt of 1960 made a point of telling me how much more serious the revolt of 1961 had been. The Right's plastic bombs, considerably more up-to-date and effective than the Algerians' home-made weapons and directed against, excuse the expression, people who count, have entered the picture in the past year. As for de Gaulle, not much more could happen to separate him further from his enemies, even though he was briefly united with some of them at the time of the generals' revolt a few months ago. I heard of an abortive plot to censor the national theatres, and I was told that no theatrical producer will take a chance with Jean Genet's latest play, *Les Paravents* (*The Screens*) because it is too emphatically pro-Algerian. Still, in matters of art, the government continues to display its ambiguity and its finesse. If there was a plan to censor the national theatres, it is obvious that men like Jean Vilar and Roger Planchon would not stand for it; to the government's credit, the national theatres have not been censored, and Vilar and Planchon are following their own preferred paths, each of them contributing more Brecht to the theatrical fare of France. Even the censorship of Genet was accomplished by passivity, the passivity of producers, and not by action. We might expect some producer to be encouraged by the warm reception of Genet's most recent plays and by the apotheosis of his first play, *The Maids*, in a special program at the Théâtre de France. No pre-censorship exists, and yet no producer has touched *Les Paravents*;

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evidently what is feared is subsequent trouble with the law. In consequence, this play had its world première in a subsidized theatre of West Berlin, where an enormous repertory cast conveyed a good deal of Genet's fire and malice but without entirely resolving certain difficulties of interpretation. *Le Monde* of Paris reported some sort of objection from the French military authorities in Berlin. One can understand the exasperation of the French military. The conquered Germans are mounting a state-supported production which bitterly attacks one of their conquerors, one of the powers still occupying West Berlin. And for the Germans to seem to be accusing the French of being tyrannical—that is a little too much.

Censorship of the press continues much as before. I recall no notable seizures of periodicals while I was in France, but I have preserved one little curiosity which I picked up in Avignon—a copy of the Communist daily *Humanité* for July 21, 1961. The crisis of the moment was the fighting in Bizerte; the Communist view of the news was too hot to print, and so the front page is mainly blank. At the top is only the date line "Bizerte" and then a large white space. We see the headline "Communiqué of the Political Bureau of the French Communist Party," but no communiqué follows, only another white space instead.

The combination of Avignon and Communism brings to mind another matter that reflects a totally different aspect of France. While I was in Avignon, a street there was named for the late actor, Gérard Philipe. It was the shortest street in the town but extremely appropriate because it was the street that Philipe would invariably take as he went from his hotel to the open-air theatre at the Palace of the Popes. The actor has also been honored, like Raimu and other masters of his art, on a French postage stamp. He was the great film hero of his time, and his death was a national calamity. Curiously, this most popular of all French actors was not content to be a film idol; he performed on the stage as well, appearing not in popular and remunerative boulevard comedies, but meeting the difficult obligations of Jean Vilar's repertory company.

It is reliably reported that Gérard Philipe was a Communist. I have never seen any reference to this matter in the United States, where, during his lifetime, such a revelation would have hurt the distribution of his films. But in France, no one cared. Right after his death, some conservative writer—I think it was François Mauriac—asked what significance the actor's Communism had. He was not a man of power, he exploded no atom bombs, he betrayed no comrades. The chief importance of his

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Communism, this writer concluded, was that this safe and wealthy public idol was not content to be safe, wealthy, and idolized; miraculously, he believed that other people were real. The argument may be sentimental, but it has a certain force. Such matters are viewed differently in France, where no amount of publicity about the actor's politics could have blacklisted him for filmwork or threatened his place on the commemorative postage stamp.

On this trip, as before, I witnessed my annual confrontation of political extremes. It was not in Paris, since the International Association of Theatre Critics did not meet this year, but in Vienna, at the International Theatre Institute. As a non-French activity, my attendance there does not properly belong in this chronicle, except for its confirming some impressions made the previous year. At least, I confirmed my impression of the extraordinary affability of those men whom the Eastern nations send to such meetings, as well as of the inflexibility of their positions. So what did I expect? Eastern delegates whom I had met casually the year before in Paris greeted me like a long-lost friend, and one of them made it seem the tragedy of the century that I had not, in the interim, visited the theatres of his capital city. A charming Roumanian actress gave me an English version of a popular Roumanian play about the Caryl Chessman case; I expressed the fear that it was not for Broadway.

Still, one issue arose to remind us that personal affability was not an alternative to politics. The Institute was debating a resolution demanding freedom for the theatre. The Eastern delegates, to a man, insisted upon and got one qualification, outlawing dramas that glorified war and turned people against one another. The trouble is that any limit on freedom, in addition to being bad in principle, invariably lends itself to misinterpretation. I assume that a Russian drama celebrating the director of the Russian hydrogen bomb project would not be considered to be opposed to the Vienna resolution; its sponsors would consider it to be a play advocating peace. But there is no point in wasting space on anything so obvious. At any rate, a Swedish delegate argued eloquently for absolute freedom, naturally to no avail.

I have one more footnote to this non-French activity of mine. The Russian delegates spoke only Russian but brought with them a very young, very blond girl translator, who turned their speeches into English. One of the delegates used the word "Communist" in a public address. I listened carefully to his translator, but I did not hear the word come out at the other end. Another American noticed the omis-

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sion. We checked with one of the uncommitted translators. We were right: the speaker had said that the theatre must help to build a Communist society, but his youthful translator, knowing better than the delegate what one may and may not say at such meetings, had altered the phrase to "a human society."

Back in France, the literary scene was, for once, rather quiet. Perhaps, as summer approached, the polemicists were resting after a hard season. I recall only one minor explosion: a devastating attack on François Mauriac in *France Observateur* by the man who had, in the same pages, skewered Parinaud for accusing Schwarz-Bart of plagiarism. Mauriac had given offense by moving from *L'Express* to *Figaro Littéraire*, but he was attacked as a writer of "mediocre novels" and "insignificant plays," a minor writer—or worse—who had become a literary celebrity only by outliving his contemporaries. A perfectionist, the attacker dismissed the attack on Mauriac which Sartre had written several years before: Sartre had seemed tired and uncertain. The tone of this piece is so foreign to our own literary life that the author was surely deliberately ironic in using a title that suggests our genteel behavior. The title is, in English, "Farewell to François Mauriac." That is usually not the sort of thing you say when you kick a 76-year-old man downstairs, but it is more dignified than "Happy landing!"

If Paris did not have an international theatre conference this year, it still held on to what was more important—an international theatre. The Théâtre des Nations is, happily, a permanent fixture on the Paris scene. It was as adventurous as ever this year, and, for once, it called on the two major powers. Perhaps I am yielding to my over-conspiratorial nature when I see some significance in the pattern of big-power participation; either both powers participate or neither one. I know that efforts were made to find an American entry in 1960. I remember seeing one of our cultural attachés theatrically clap his hand to his forehead in mock despair when he was asked about the progress of negotiations. (It was the same gesture that I saw Ionesco use when someone asked him what he thought of the British production of *The Rhinoceros*.) At one time it seemed that we would be represented by *The Visit*, a Swiss play, directed by an Englishman with a mainly British cast, in which Alfred Lunt, a native son of Wisconsin, constituted the most obviously American element. I heard that Lunt himself finally decided that his presence did not qualify the production as an American entry.

This year, however, both of the great powers sent productions. I observed complete impartiality by missing the official entries of both

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nations. I was still in New York when the Russians arrived with their most popular new play, *It Happened in Irkutsk*, which sounds like a very obvious, conventional boy-girl story; one friend of mine refused, on grounds of taste, not politics, to help translate it. I was in Berlin most of the time that the official American entry was in Paris. Our entry was the Theatre Guild company, headed by Helen Hayer, in *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Skin of Our Teeth*. It was a popular success, and it won the critics' respect but not their love. Neither of the official entries of the two great powers won any prizes. The Americans did better with their unofficial entry, the Living Theatre of New York in Jack Gelber's *The Connection*. This production had an electrifying effect upon its audience. What particularly won the evening was the acting, the effect of unactorish improvisation which these mostly young and unpolished actors conveyed. But the play, mean and undisciplined as the acting, had its own success and was more than just a vehicle for performance. The company, headed by two veterans of civil disobedience, had had no public assistance for its journey to Paris. The Living Theatre had raised its own money by selling pictures which artists had donated. To cap it all, this company brought a play which exhibited and seemed to defend drug-addiction. *The Connection* was, to put it mildly, not a paid advertisement for the American way of life. But it won prizes. I hesitate to say—therefore, it won prizes, but I am tempted. I rather suspect that if some sort of unofficial Russian entry, composed of anti-social "hooligans," had somehow made its way to Paris, it might have carried off some awards. (As I write "hooligans," I think of it as a Russian word with its main accent on the last syllable.)

Apart from *The Connection*, the most remarkable production at the Théâtre des Nations was Goldoni's *The Good-Natured Women*, performed by Giorgio de Lullo's company from Rome. The play is short on logic but, correspondingly, full of practical jokes and chance encounters. The jokes, played on a stingy old man and his old maid sister, seem more cruel than most. At the end, the old maid loses to one of the heroines the young man she wanted; then the jokesters disguise a servant as a gentleman and send him to court her in elaborate but dubious French. Just as her heart is won, the chief jokester humiliates her by handing the servant a tray of empty cups and bids him resume his regular function. What has she done to deserve this embarrassment? Nothing but to seek a husband.

Fortunately, the play is little more than a scenario for the actors' inventiveness, mainly in pantomime. I have seen no actors gesticulate as

meaningfully as these Italians. In the first act, I found that my transistor radio, bringing me a French translation of the action, was not working; but I did not bother to get a good one for the second act. The eloquent gestures were telling me more than my feeble understanding of Italian concealed. They entertained even when they were not being used to any obviously comic effect. In the second act, two hungry men attack a pot of minestrone, miming first a desperate need for it and then a rapturous delight as they consume it. What makes hunger and satisfaction so funny? Only the possibility of conveying it and, in fact, overdoing it by gesture. This company gets conventional laughs as well, when the actor who plays the old man somehow expands his chin till it is half his face and, in the act of eating, dips his long curls in his food with unfailing accuracy. These actors have gestures, wild, free, extravagant, meaningful or meaningless gestures to use or to throw away. I wished, indeed, that they might throw a few in the direction of the more studied, deliberate, and cautious mimes of the Comédie Française. This was my first Goldoni and a revelation. Happily, I soon experienced two more revelations, watching *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Volksbuehne of East Berlin and *The Boors*, performed by Vilar's company in Avignon. I thought with regret that, in America, the professional theatre has no such links with the past. We agree with Henry Ford: "History is bunk." Accordingly, Congreve and Jonson are as dead to us as Molière or Goldoni or Calderón. The plays performed by Vilar and the Volksbuehne are inconceivable to us as live compositions for the stage. For us, their natural home is not the theatre but an academician's anthology. The loss is ours.

The best publicized and the most controversial event at the Théâtre des Nations was the opening of John Osborne's *Luther*. The British critics, who crossed the channel to see it, found it masterly. Disagreement on a national basis seems remarkably consistent; French and American observers did not care for it. This may be natural enough; at a time of theatrical revival, like the current activity of England, we may expect those critics whose revival it is to be carried away. That is the kindest way of interpreting the British critics' response to *Luther*. Osborne and his defenders have confused matters by introducing issues which they would like to see in the play, but the barrenness of *Luther* should not be an excuse for inventing contents which it does not possess.

For instance, Osborne contributed a program note to the effect that religion without mystery is like marriage without sex. He seems to be defending the "mystery" of the play's religion, but the only mystery is

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the absence of religion; and certainly religious mystery is absent. One of Osborne's critical defenders offered a little anthology of oddity: he reported that the French critics had liked it, that he was relieved to find that Christianity came off no worse, and that, if we must have Marx in the theatre, at least this was good Marx. But *Luther* is not a Marxist or even a social drama. Osborne attempts no coherent presentation of history; if social history enters at all, it is in a peculiar afterthought, when Luther is castigated for not supporting the Peasants' Revolt.

What, then, is *Luther* about? It is a product of solipsism, an extension of Osborne's angry young man backward into history, an effort to put the angry young man's mark upon the world. I prefer the angry young man when the world is putting its mark upon him, as in *Epitaph for George Dillon*. Luther is George Dillon or Jimmie Porter with a religious movement at his back, finding public means to embody a private rebellion. The origins of his rebellion are made as private as possible: revolt against his father and his own gastric disorder. Rebellion expresses his inner turmoil, not a meaningful comment on society and the church. As if to reflect Luther's own chaos, the play is made up of scattered scenes around the situation, imitating the form but not the essence of Brecht's method in *Galileo*. In the last of these scenes, Luther has attained satiety, not by satisfying his demands on the world but by finding a wife who is a good cook. Between the acts, I had been quipping that Luther's problem would be solved by the invention of Ex-Lax. I was distressed to find myself so near the truth.

The importance that Osborne attributes to the gastric system in influencing the course of religious history, together with the national differences reflected in the play's reception, led me to construct a gastro-national history of religion. Osborne is obviously generalizing from the example of Luther's Germany and his own England. Need we wonder why these countries are the true homes of Protestantism? Obviously, their cuisines drove them to it. On the other hand, France and Italy, lulled by expert gastronomy, remained happy and content in the embrace of the church, and I had the vivid example of Goldoni's *minestrone* to confirm my impression of Italy's gastro-national function.

Just before I left Europe, some newspaper items furnished additional confirmation. The *Observer* of London brought over one of the Guide Michelin's anonymous observers to study London's restaurants. Of course, he found the best of them wanting. The next week, the *Observer* published a letter from "A. C. Waters," who deplored the waste of good newspaper space, observed that no man interested in food and drink

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was worth anything, and that the whole thing was "monstrous." I was on the point of writing the *Observer* not to put too much faith in the reality of a correspondent who pretends to bear the name of his favorite beverage, when an item in another newspaper of that day reminded me to take a long view of national differences. The Communist Sunday *Humanité* was describing to its readers the delights that awaited them in the coming Russian exhibit. The readers were reminded that, in addition to all their other accomplishments, the Russians were great gastronomes and that it befitted the French, "gourmets as all of us are," to take an interest in Russian cuisine. I am positive that the London *Daily Worker* approaches the issue differently, assuring its readers that the Russians are just like them and that they, too, despise food.

To be sure, national differences are Europe's principal export, but an American tends to forget. I was surprised, between the acts of *Luther*, to find that I could communicate only with my French and American friends. The British were speaking another language.

Apart from the Théâtre des Nations, Paris had a rather mediocre theatrical season, nothing like the previous year, in which I had seen new plays by Sartre, Genet, Ionesco, and Beckett and months of activity by Planchon. Not one of these dramatists contributed a new play, and Planchon stayed in the provinces. I was told that the leading event of the early season was Max Frisch's *Biedermann and the Incendiaries*, a Swiss-German play, and that Vilar had an exceptionally strong season, especially distinguishing himself in Brecht's *Arturo Ui*. He played Hitler without a mustache and apparently played him saner than the Berliner Ensemble had. Vilar and Barrault had closed their theatres by the time I arrived, but I was able to catch the commercial hit of the season, Marcel Achard's *L'Idiot*, adapted for Broadway as *A Shot in the Dark*. This play grafts upon a transparent murder mystery those quips that Achard's considerable audience has always found irresistible. I was amused by a little trick that the French like to pull but which the American version excises. The heroine, the female idiot of the title, has been the mistress of her employer, a dapper, sophisticated, well-educated gentleman. At the end of the play, she has been exonerated of murder, but, clearly, she should stay away from her former lover. Awaiting release, she is guarded by a gendarme who strikingly resembles her dapper employer. It is the same actor, who has now adopted a country accent and a lower-class manner. The girl takes an instant liking to him, and they make a date. The French like extravagant little jokes that play with identity.

When the French encounter a dearth of good new plays, they have

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a solution that never occurs to us. They stage good old plays, not only at the Comédie Française, still struggling to revive tragedy with Hugo's *Ruy Blas*, but everywhere else in the city. Suzanne Flon gave us an engaging *Twelfth Night*, adapted by Anouilh and his wife. She played both Viola and Sebastian; at the confrontation, Miss Flon and a silent actress, picked only for her resemblance to the star, step behind a shadow screen, and Miss Flon does all the talking. The Théâtre de France had ambitious revivals of three modern classics—*Waiting for Godot*, *The Maids*, and Ionesco's *Amédée*, mounted in splendid surroundings that seemed in a way to betray their humble origins. *Godot* was set in a vast plain, decorated only by a rather abstract tree. Gogo had almost the fixed, painted face of a clown, and the part was played accordingly. That interpretation evidently comes closer to what Beckett meant than Bert Lahr's effort to humanize the role. I applauded the purity and the authenticity of this interpretation, but I felt more at home watching a less inhibited revival of an Ionesco double bill—*Jack* and *The Chairs*.

Reserves from the provinces were also performing old plays. The Théâtre de l'Est of Strasbourg had a long run in Paris with Duerrenmatt's *The Visit of an Old Lady* and Victor Hugo's *Thousand Francs Reward*. The first play was presented in the lively and imaginative fashion that Duerrenmatt intended, not in the dull and stodgy style of the American adaptation. The principle is the one established in the doubling of *L'Idiote*: the European playgoer can take some little jokes at the expense of reality; on the American stage, objective reality is usually sacred, even if nothing else is. So, the American version gave the visiting lady a Latin-American gigolo. In France, the lady runs through three husbands during her short stay in her home town, each one played by the same actor wearing different beards and displaying, in turn, Spanish, English, and German accents. When the pastor advises the lady's chosen victim to leave town, suddenly, as if to give point to his remarks, a suitcase descends from above. Picking it up, the victim marks time until the scene changes from the church to the railroad station. The same spirit of playfulness is present in the Hugo work, an improbable melodrama, with a lovable vagabond, a long-lost daughter, a merciless skinflint, and all the rest of that gang. Even the décor is permitted to help out in the general merriment: in the first act, the curtains, the walls, the heroine's dress, the hero's trousers and cravat are all in the same shade of light green, and almost everything else, including the villain's hair, is orange.

Summer in France is the time for revivals of the classics, usually in

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open-air theatres, and I mean the classics, not *John Loves Mary*. In Avignon, I saw Vilar doing *The Boors* and Calderón's *The Mayor of Zalamea*. In Marseilles, Planchon staged Molière's *George Dandin* and his own, very free adaptation of Marlowe's *Edward II*. Planchon has his own solution for the lack of new plays: he is going to write his own, and he has given up acting to work on them. I shall miss him on the stage, but I am delighted to see him make this new use of one of the finest dramatic talents I have ever observed.

And so, one comes to no conclusion more profound than that the old diversity is still there, taking whatever forms offer themselves, vibrating with the same old energy. I even think it is a safe bet that it will still be there when I come again.

Crisis in Saigon: the Sunday Morning Visitor Returns

Luther Allen

EVERY SUNDAY AFTERNOON the American Ambassador in Saigon invited members of the American community to an informal open house. Many such affairs were dominated by a seemingly endless badminton tournament. The usual chit-chat between old timers and new arrivals characteristically began with "How long are you here for?" followed by assurances that the local American Commissary was well stocked. (It was indeed. It offered stereophonic equipment, pink and blue super-soft toilet tissue, Hallowe'en masks, Christmas tree ornaments, and frozen dog bones.) The underlings from the Embassy served as sub-hosts at the open house, gracious in manner and often more official and dogmatic than the Ambassador in support of the policies and regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem.

The atmosphere at the Ambassador's house was more serious and charged on the afternoon of Sunday, November 13, 1960. A fellow Smith-Mundt professor and I had decided for once to attend in an effort to deliver the message from our Sunday Morning Visitor.* This Visitor was a deeply disturbed Vietnamese intellectual and a passionate

* This article is a sequel to "The Sunday Morning Visitor: Reflections on the Crisis in Saigon," which appeared in the Winter 1961 issue of MR.

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lover of liberty who had sought us out that morning to express to us his anxiety. A refugee from the Communist regime in the North, he had come to South Viet Nam because he had hoped the ideals of America would somehow be shared and implemented by the new Diem Regime. But he had become disillusioned at the dictatorial practices of this regime and he, like other Saigonese, dared hope that the paratroopers' coup of November 11th might open the door to greater liberty. Now with the failure of the coup he came to beg us to urge our government to intervene against repression of the anti-Communist elements who sympathized with the leaders of the coup.

What interpretation could one make of the abortive coup? What could a visiting American professor do to try to salvage such spirits from despair and passive acceptance of Communist subversion in South Viet Nam? How would the prospective Vietnamese Presidential election appear to an American political scientist and to his Vietnamese students and friends after the local United States Information Service (in public media) and he (in his classes) had sought to spotlight and analyze the recent American Presidential elections? How, in effect, would John F. Kennedy's recent election affect conditions in South Viet Nam?

THE AMBASSADOR'S WIFE, upon our arrival, proceeded to caricature the events of the last two days in cops-and-robbers fashion. What a strong and brave man President Diem had again shown himself to be. Wasn't he wonderful! The Ambassador and his staff had given up the long weekend vacation that had been planned, working around the clock. Not until that afternoon had the Ambassador been able to escape for relaxation on the golf links. Her approach was reiterated in the November 19th issue of the local English language weekly, *The Times of Viet Nam*, which summed up the abortive coup by quoting a young American's letter to her mother back home:

For two days we have seen here a real gunfight between the good men and the bad men. At first it seemed that the bad men were going to win, but the good men soon took over. Now it's all over and they still have their President! Do not worry about me, just send me a pair of pajamas.

The most controversial single event during the troubled two days had been the shooting on Saturday morning at a crowd which had been called out the previous day by the rebel leaders only to find the Presidential palace now surrounded by loyal forces. The Counsellor of the Embassy graciously assured us that only a handful of civilian demonstrators had been killed. He claimed that the troops loyal to the President had shot

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over the heads of the hostile crowd. A roving French journalist who had crashed the party claimed, however, that hundreds had been killed. He said he had seen countless unidentified corpses in the Saigon morgue, giving a description that stood in sharp contrast to the usual conversations of the open house. Later a law student's anonymous first-hand report was read to me. In it the student described the popular nature of the rallies and the confusion attending the replacement of the paratroopers ringing the Presidential palace by forces which proved loyal to Diem. He recorded his shock and nausea at the Saturday morning massacre of civilians. When he later went to one of the five hospitals of Saigon to look for his cousin, he counted fifty civilian dead there alone.

When the Ambassador finally arrived, he proved most receptive to the message I sought to communicate. He said he had been making many private representations to Diem and would continue to do so. He was interested in my reports and asked me to pass them on to the political officers in the Embassy. But he balked bluntly at the suggestion of any public, official word of criticism of Diem's government on the Voice of America or elsewhere. He said he had known the Communists since 1934 (he had served as a member of Ambassador William E. Bullitt's initial team to Russia after the United States finally recognized the Soviet regime). "They'd really throw that at us!" I told him I felt I had to write a letter to the *New York Times* and that I'd send him a copy. Next day I worked out the proposed letter:

The abortive coup undertaken against the Ngo Dinh Diem government was neither Communist nor Colonialist as Diem's defenders initially charged. The paratrooper units initiating hostilities in Saigon on November 11 had been used as trouble shooters against recent serious Communist attacks in the countryside. Dr. Phan Quang Dan, who spoke on the rebel-controlled radio Friday evening, was a Deputy elected by a clear majority in August, 1959, from Saigon but prevented from taking his seat. Six of the avowed members of the "Committee of the Revolution" rallying to the coup were among the signers of a manifesto attacking the Diem regime reported by Tillman Durdin in the *New York Times* of May 1st of this year.

There has been no evidence of effective organization of the opposition. Behind them there arose intellectuals, insecure refugees from the North, most of whose passionate but vague nationalist and liberal ideals are on the point of collapsing. . . .

The Vietnamese crowds who risked being shot down by the palace guard shouted, among other things, "Vive Kennedy." They had not understood the tragic difference between using ballots and using bullets. But among them

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there were those who believe passionately in the ideals of liberty and representative government which inspired both the American and the French Revolutions.

America has intervened willy-nilly by our aid to this country. Is there not a moral duty as well as a material interest to intervene politically, albeit with the greatest skill and tact, to show to the troubled, terrified but still free spirits whose hopes rose up in a too brief, pathetic day of liberty that we want them to remain on our side?

In the battle against Communism, South Viet Nam needs the support of all the army and all the civilian population. It is to be hoped that President Diem will show full comprehension of the political significance of these events and that his reaction to them will not hinder either the military or political unity and strength so necessary in the anti-Communist struggle at this moment. It is to be feared that severe repression of the elements who raised their heads in this abortive coup will only strengthen the political appeal and military capacity of the Communists, to the mortal danger not only of the Diem regime but of America's position in this part of the world.

The Ambassador later thanked me for a copy, claiming that many of those held for questioning in connection with their part in the coup had been released, noting also that President Diem had stated that those responsible for the recent events would be tried according to law (this has not yet been done). "It is to be hoped," the Ambassador wrote, "that these events will bring all concerned to realize that their true enemy is Communism and no other."

The *New York Times* ultimately replied that they were unable to publish the letter. Their editorials had expressed relief at the re-establishment of order but they urged internal reforms. An outspoken defense of the courage of Dr. Dan appeared among the published "Letters to the Editor" from a free Vietnamese scholar residing in New Haven, Connecticut.

My channels of communication remained largely secret and official. Each week I reported conversations with students and intellectuals to political officers of the American Embassy. The former group consented hopefully to my activity while the officials evinced initial interest and even sympathy.

THE ATMOSPHERE of Saigon immediately after the coup was fearful and repressive. Most French and American newspaper and magazine reports on the abortive coup were censored. The lovely trees lining the streets of Saigon were plastered with fuchsia-colored posters of the

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"Counter-Coup Committee against Communists and Colonialists," warning of severe penalties against anyone harboring participants in the coup. Rumors of extensive informing procedures and massive arrests of intellectuals and students as well as of army officers as suspected oppositionists were broadcast by word of mouth in the cafés of the Rue Catinat, the main avenue of westernized Saigon (the Vietnamese name for which was "Tu-Do," meaning "liberty"). "Radio Catinat" later spread false rumors of a second coup by the army in the provinces and also of the torture and killing of Dr. Dan after the coup. The latter report appeared credible enough to be published in the distinguished French newspaper, *Le Monde*.

According to official accounts of the abortive coup, the paratroopers had been misled by a handful of officers who were linked to a local lawyer's plot to establish members of his family as the rebel government. The enlisted men among the paratroopers were said to have been told by these officers that they were being sent to rescue the President, who had become prisoner of his palace guard in a Communist plot. The President was therefore justified in renegeing on his promise to the leaders of the coup to form a new government which would include some of them. Articles in the Saigon press proceeded to defend the President's wisdom in relying on the advice of members of his family and to deny that brother Nhu and Madame Nhu controlled a rice monopoly. Didn't Kennedy, Nehru, Bourguiba, and Castro rely on members of their families too? South Viet Nam could proudly contrast the "valiant, vigilant members of its National Assembly" with the Communist representatives selected by the "free" electorates of "Brooklyn, Tottenham, Auber-villiers."

One such article, entitled "Radio Catinat parle à l'Occident," was published in the French language weekly, *Extrême Asie*, on December 3rd. It violently attacked the press in the West, accusing reporters of gleaning falsehoods from Colonialists and Communists who fed false rumors on to the Rue Catinat. Papers such as the London *Times*, the *New York Herald-Tribune*, and *France Soir* were charged with commercialism and sensationalism for reporting the fall of the Diem regime in their issues of November 12th while the *Manchester Guardian* was charged with anti-popey for its attacks on Diem (a devout Catholic in a predominantly non-Christian country) and his family regime (one of the brothers is Archbishop). Viet Nam had no lessons to learn from the capitalist press with its falsification of a "*coup de tabac*" led by "*condotières de carnaval*" and with its slanderous treatment of Viet

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Nam's great leader. What Viet Nam needed was stronger official propaganda and, by implication, extended official control over the press.

While the President repudiated the promise he made at the time of the coup to form a new government and while there was a wave of repression and intense propaganda by the Counter-Coup Committee, the government also announced forthcoming massive reforms. There followed a series of gestures. But none of them managed to capture the imagination of the disaffected intelligentsia. Some of them simply reinforced cynicism. Indeed in the immediate post-coup period Vietnamese intellectuals were afraid to talk freely with one another.

MONDAY MORNING after the coup I felt intensely the oppressiveness of the growing official censorship and propaganda but I also felt that I must try to communicate with my students about the events of the past three days. I prepared a statement to read to each of my classes which was more muted than my letter to the *New York Times* since, as a Smith-Mundt Professor, I felt obliged to avoid any direct public criticism of the legal government of my host country. I repeated certain points from the letter. I also sought to interpret the events of the past three days to students of political science by suggesting that when a group takes up arms against the established government it needs effective organization. Such a group inevitably takes on the risk of punishment if it fails. Attempted coups are combinations of military and political power. But the paratroopers, the revolutionary committee, and Dr. Dan lacked organization, leadership, and a program, while President Ngo Dinh Diem showed courage and skill. He was ready for political compromise at one point but at the same time he demonstrated that he had military force which he could count on. Now that order had been reestablished, he had the right to punish the leaders of the unsuccessful coup and the duty to reunite his armed forces. Again I asked whether he would show comprehension of the political demands of the rebels, but this was worded vaguely.

In the final paragraph I tried to show where my own sympathies lay, suspecting that some of my students had participated in the rallies during the coup while others were likely to inform to the police. (I later was told on good authority about the informing at the Faculty that went on and also that one of my former students was now among the group of paratroop officers who had fled to Cambodia after the coup.)

As an American I can only say that I am deeply moved by the tragedy of these days. I have urged my government to use its authority discreetly in the

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direction of restraining repressive measures. I recognize that for some this is a crisis of conscience in the values we share in our opposition to Communism. Cling to those values. Have faith in liberty. This is first of all a personal question. Our first and most important job is to study, to learn and prepare the educated, liberal minds which Viet Nam needs for her future development.

The statement seemed to come as a surprise and even a shock to my eight o'clock class. At first there was stony silence, but later I noticed some animated exchanges among a few students. Between classes there was an air of excitement in the courtyard of the Faculty and, by the time of my ten o'clock class, the word obviously had spread that I was commenting on the abortive coup. This time I read the statement more slowly to a crowded classroom. It seemed to sink in. The students clapped. Some of them came up after class to ask for a copy. Most of them, however, did not copy the last paragraph and one student even felt it was necessary to apologize to me for the fact that Dr. Dan had openly identified himself with Kennedy, and with the Democratic Party, which he knew I supported. Already I could sense new difficulties of communication in the post-coup atmosphere of Saigon.

The evening seminar was most interested in my statement. I took the opportunity to review the history of Indochina since 1954, stressing the difficulties faced by the Diem government in establishing its authority in South Viet Nam and also the simultaneous difficulties of Pierre Mendès-France in achieving a settlement of the French-Indochina war at Geneva. The students asked me to talk about the coup, so I simply passed on my observations as freely and objectively as I could. There were more students present than usual, and I sensed an opening up of their attitudes. French and Vietnamese colleagues spoke more freely and frankly with me. But I felt on leaving the courtyard of the Faculty of Law as if I were leaving a little haven of freedom, a modern equivalent of medieval sanctuary in the tropical, ex-colonial setting of Saigon. Would the students dare to return to my house now that additional policemen were taking notes of comings and goings there? It was even rumored that our servants were reporting on conversations inside the house.

A week passed and no students came. I went to the Seminar with clippings from Western papers which had been censored by Vietnamese authorities. (I had been able to follow the reaction to the coup in the Western press, thanks to a U.S. Army post office address which spared me the hazards of local censorship.) Even more so than on the previous Monday I noticed that one student in particular seemed to stimulate free and frank discussion and analysis. At the end of the session he came

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to me with a book on Southeast Asia which I recognized as the one to which my Sunday Morning Visitor had referred. In it I found a letter in French:

I thank you most sincerely for everything you have done. Your interest touched me profoundly. I take back all I said about the Army which gave proof of solidarity and discipline. Between it and the people there is reciprocal confidence. It is as profoundly anti-Communist as is the population of Saigon.

In sum there are many positive elements.

The Communists are in the process of trying to profit from the situation, from the anxiety, disarray, and deception of certain elements of the Army and the people. . . .

The reactions of Western friends are comforting elements; unfortunately these are little known since the Vietnamese language press gives only a very incomplete account. . . . I hope to see you very soon. The student who offers you this book is *un ami très sûr*.

With joy I arranged for the student, a cynical civil servant employed by one of the psychological warfare services, and the Sunday Morning Visitor, to talk with me the next evening at my house. We did so upstairs behind the noise of the air conditioner. They had been heartened by the response of Americans and other foreigners to the coup and were delighted with my draft letter to the *New York Times*. In their opinion most of the editorials in Vietnamese papers in regard to reforms amounted to little more than efforts to increase the number of official party members in the Civil Service. Hopefully they presented me with typed proposals "For a Democratic Solution," an effort at writing down reforms that should be undertaken as a response to the coup, and they urged me to pass these on to the American embassy.

After introductory references to the growing Communist menace, the post-coup repression in Saigon, and the victory of liberal tendencies in the recent American elections, they proceeded to advocate the education of the Vietnamese people for democracy. For this purpose a new Vietnamese-American cultural circle should be instituted, directed by American liberals and disseminating the opinions of American liberal publications without being subject to local censorship. Such a circle should encourage the Vietnamese people to study and discuss general problems as well as those pertaining to Viet Nam. There should be a weekly publication in the Vietnamese language. Such a publication should receive definitive authorization to appear without submission to censorship after printing, with circulation and sale immediately by independent means (all in contrast to present Vietnamese government control over the

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press). Once in print the newspaper would otherwise be responsible under existing legislation.

The proposals put priority upon freedom of discussion and of the press in a pilot program counting on American cooperation and pressure. While I felt the proposals paid too little attention to the problem of growing Communist subversion, I was nonetheless struck by their concrete character. I got the impression that the Sunday Morning Visitor wanted me to help organize this Vietnamese-American cultural circle and to see that Washington would demand of President Diem his acquiescence in the establishment of this pilot, free press.

The most I could do was to pass the proposals "For a Democratic Solution" on through channels in Saigon (and, much later, in an unofficial round of conversations in Washington). The response from officials at both ends was cool. How could the United States respond meaningfully to such proposals? Was the Peace Corps proposal of the Kennedy administration broad enough to embrace them? And if so would the United States be willing and able to force them on the Diem regime? These are, alas, long-range questions.

In the short run I sought to discourage my Sunday Morning Visitor and my graduate student, who was his friend, in their hopes for immediate implementation of a pilot Vietnamese-American people-to-people project to introduce free political discussion and a free press. Instead I tried to shift their interest to concrete suggestions in regard to the forthcoming Vietnamese Presidential elections.

SIX WEEKS BEFORE the abortive coup I had chatted with an Embassy aide about the prospective Presidential elections which had been stipulated in Diem's 1956 Constitution for the following April. The only candidate he could suggest was Dr. Dan, who of course was jailed after the abortive coup. Just two days before the coup the Vietnamese National Assembly debated possible one-year emergency power to Diem in the light of rising Communist guerilla activity.

As part of the "massive reforms," the government announced later that the elections would be held as stipulated, and in late December an electoral law was put through the National Assembly without serious public debate. Under it candidates for the Presidency and Vice Presidency were to run as a pair, thus precluding a possible contest in the selection of President Diem's running mate. Applications for candidatures were to be delivered to the Secretary of the National Assembly sixty days before the election.

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Two opposition lists were accepted. One (List II) was led by a wealthy business man and plantation owner with a leader of the Cao Dai politico-religious sect as Vice Presidential candidate. List III was led by an aged traditional Chinese doctor with a relatively strong Vice Presidential candidate who had a reputation as a revolutionary nationalist under French rule. He had served as a mentor to Ho Chi Minh in the early 1920's. Neither of the opposition candidates was widely known, and the Vietnamese press treated both lists contemptuously and calumniously, publishing faked photographs of the business man embracing taxi girls and stressing the fact that when the old Chinese doctor spoke in public he broke down in tears. While both Vice Presidential opposition candidates showed strength in their appearances at public rallies, President Diem entered the contest as List I with his incumbent Vice President, an agreeable but self-effacing gentleman from the southern delta area. Elaborate reviews of the record of their first administration and extensive programs for the next were accorded massive space in the press and on the radio. The Viet Nam Press agency and the various psychological and information services worked overtime for two solid months. Formally the campaign was prepared by designated committees but government officials on all levels were active in "preparing the elections." Civil Servants, including elementary and high school teachers, were required to campaign arduously for List I. No opposition party organization existed, and List I proudly claimed that this was a contest for the best man, ignoring the monopoly of official party organization behind President Diem and the active role of the growing, uniformed Republican Youth Movement. Many Civil Servants feared that a hostile vote might be detected and lead to the loss of one's job. Simple readers of the Vietnamese language press, like my neighbor's servant, might well vote for President Diem because, according to the papers, "the others have faults!"

During January my Sunday Morning Visitor looked on the coming presidential election cynically. He hoped Diem would consider his Vice Presidential candidate seriously. It was rumored that the incumbent did not want to run again, and one of the new newspapers claimed that a very old professor at the Law School might replace him. "Radio Catinat" went so far as to report that Diem would name brother Ngo Dinh Nhu. This, I said, would be *the* occasion for all-out U. S. pressure (which of course would require withdrawal of our military commitments). By now Diem's repudiation of his promises during the coup seemed to have destroyed any remaining confidence the Sunday Morn-

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ing Visitor could have in him. He was particularly upset over what confronted his son at school. All the children had been required to write an essay on the coup according to the official version. This produced a crisis around the family table at home where quite a different version had been presented. The regime, he insisted, must go *in toto*. A change of institutions was fundamental, and he seemed to look forward to another coup with American support this time (the French press had already claimed American collusion in the November 11th uprising). While he had an exaggerated confidence in American power and friendship, he didn't seem to take the dangers of Communist subversion very seriously. Significantly he stressed the problem of low morale which was turning his type of person to passive acceptance of Communism despite his own past experience with Communist brutality in the North. It was hard for him to distinguish between the oppressiveness of the Diem regime and that of Ho Chi Minh. The new "National Liberation Front" tactic set by Hanoi in December clearly could make an effective appeal to this state of mind.

AT THE SAME TIME I learned that able and uncompromised figures, such as a highly cultivated judge whom I knew, were refusing high government posts. The post-coup atmosphere seemed to have strengthened *attentisme*. The Sunday Morning Visitor claimed that honest people had been brought into the regime a few years ago but they had been swallowed up by the system. Often in my conversations with him I referred optimistically to my Dean, an honest critic of the regime who had formerly held high government posts and who might conceivably be reappointed to a key position. In the autumn I had come to admire the Dean's liberal spirit as well as his administrative dynamism and his competence as an economist dedicated to long-range planning.

Toward the end of January I ran into the Dean upon his return from Paris where he had observed the Western reaction to the unsuccessful coup. He seemed himself then to be near despair. But when I told him how strongly I felt about America's responsibility for liberalization of the regime, he told me of a meeting for a United Front for Democracy, an anti-Communist and anti-totalitarian movement which he and his friends were undertaking to try to express opinion freely in public, working on the assumption that liberalization was possible within the system. The ultimate objective would be the transformation of the struggle with North Viet Nam into a less military and a more political competition. I was struck by the way he got to the heart of things in our conversation, by the purity and passion of his ideas which were ex-

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pressed in the French revolutionary tradition but with a special affection for America and Americans. He manifested an ideal vision of liberty and democracy. But he also responded with interest to my request for concrete suggestions which I might pass on to American officials.

I tried to enlist my Sunday Morning Visitor in the Dean's United Front for Democracy when I next saw him, but he was mistrustful, suspecting another trap of the regime. The next time I saw the Dean I began to share some of this mistrust myself. This time he had just returned from New Delhi where he found Diem's prestige higher than in the West. Asians, he claimed, assumed that the United States must have been behind the abortive coup, and therefore Diem's comeback was proof of his independence. I observed that this was a victory of nationalism over liberalism! He replied that this was appropriate for the new nations of Asia and Africa. How could Viet Nam adopt Western style democracy before mastering the problems of illiteracy and economic under-development? I got the impression he had moved quite spontaneously toward a pro-government position, though he laughed when I mentioned to him the rumor reported in a local paper that he might become a Minister.

In March the Dean gave an interview on Radio Viet Nam in which he characterized the forthcoming Presidential elections as a step on the path to democracy. By deciding to hold them, the President had set a precedent that could lead to a new era. The government could have advanced plausible reasons for postponement on the grounds of existing insecurity in certain areas, but, had this been done, it was his personal opinion that the Constitution would have been violated. Ultimately he felt that the people in the North would be influenced by the progress of the South toward democracy in contrast to Communist rule.

Immediately *Extrême Asie* (which is published by the President of the National Assembly) replied with a violent attack. The Dean was accused of incompetence as a jurist for "overlooking Article 38" of the Vietnamese Constitution which the editorialist very dubiously interpreted as authorizing the prolongation of the President's mandate in time of war. As for the appeal to the North emanating from democratization in the South, *Extrême Asie* (with historical references which smacked of a fascist point of view) asked if the Dean would advocate this childish project of overthrowing a regime by setting a model example if he had any idea of the conditions under which Communism took root in Italy in 1921 and in France and Spain in 1935. Next, the writer charged that what the Dean was supporting would lead to the creation throughout the

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country of electoral committees of the Communist type, recruited, paid, and ordered by Hanoi, Peking, and Moscow! The article concluded by suggesting that the Dean attend a course on world history since 1917.

It was not clear just what was behind this attack. What was heartening, however, was the Dean's response. He showed his mettle in a reply published in *The Times of Viet Nam*, March 23, 1961. Having noted that his remarks had already provoked instant protests from Radio Hanoi, he was amused to find these same words bitterly attacked by a professedly anti-Communist publication. He went on to speak of the difficult position in which democrats in many countries of the world find themselves—"a simultaneous struggle fought on two fronts." He had interpreted the Constitution not as a legal expert but as a citizen and a democrat:

If the jurist can seek reassurance for himself that a prolongation of the presidential mandate is based on the above-mentioned Article 38, the case is not so with the democratic citizen, who has reasons to be alarmed. . . . For any suspension of elections stands as an exception to the rules.

He noted that the Vietnamese people had not been told that full-scale war had broken out in their country. Hence they would find it difficult to understand why the Presidential elections should be suspended, especially in "the aftermath of a sad affair such as that we have witnessed on November 11. . . ."

In answering the charge that he was wrong in overestimating the psychological reactions which could result in North Viet Nam from the development of an increasingly democratic regime in the South, he asked why West Germany exercises such a powerful attraction over the Germans in the East.

How can one explain the dramatic exodus of more than 800,000 refugees from the North in 1954?

Being myself a refugee, I know what represented for us a hope, a stimulus, a reason to live and struggle. . . . This haven of liberty that is Viet Nam. Thank God! Let it remain always a haven of liberty towards which all aspirations of our countrymen from the North converge.

Your editorial writer may also have forgotten the uprising of the Hungarian people and that of the peasants [of North Viet Nam] at Quynh Lun!

We professors have vowed to dedicate our lives to study. We shall attend, without shame, any course of world political history which may be created eventually. But we only wish to express the wish that people who have taken upon themselves the duty of enlightening and guiding public opinion should possess the same freedom of mind as we, the same desire for self-education, the

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some intellectual honesty, and, above all, the same "fair play" required of all public debates.

For once a genuine clash of political opinion had been allowed in the Saigon press (at least to readers of the French and English languages). But the debate ended abruptly. I found that out myself when *The Times of Viet Nam* returned a letter of mine which discussed juristically the meaning of Article 38 of the Vietnamese Constitution. The editor wrote me apologetically stating that the authorities had asked him to cut off public discussion of this issue.

SINCE TET TIME (the Chinese Lunar New Year which was celebrated in mid-February) the atmosphere of Saigon had become more relaxed. By mid-March the opposition lists held press conferences and rallies at which many of the criticisms which had been expressed during the abortive coup were aired. Campaigners for the Presidential list were asked why there was so much Communist subversion in the countryside, why Dr. Dan and others were still in jail, why Ngo Dinh Nhu and Madame Nhu played such a large role in the regime, and why there wasn't more liberty. At one point during the open meetings of an opposition list the police utilized a goon squad which had been organized with purported official encouragement to break up the meeting. While these developments were not reported fairly in the press, it was possible for brave, politically minded Saigonese to participate in the rallies themselves. At each I invariably met a student or an older intellectual who offered to translate the proceedings for me. A breath of liberty had been allowed in the market places of Saigon, in the adjoining Chinese city of Cholon, and in the suburbs. And when I next saw my Sunday Morning Visitor I discovered a resurrected spirit.

He was encouraged by the appointments and by the initial moves of the Kennedy administration, by the Dean's reply to *Extrême Asie*, and especially by the Vietnamese election rallies. We found our conversation more open and free than before. He now admitted that he had to prefer the United States to the Communists. Hateful as the Diem dictatorship was and skeptical as he remained about the coming elections, he knew that Diem ultimately would go and that there could some day be a truly free Viet Nam in the South. The Communist regime was by its nature rigid, precluding serious hope for future change. Having refused to contemplate voting two months earlier, he now proudly declared he would vote for List III.

In effect, the recent sparks of liberty permitted by the authorities in

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Saigon during the election campaign were of crucial importance. My Sunday Morning Visitor was convinced that the Diem regime had opened these safety valves under American pressure. With a little imagination it was possible to interpret the Dean's reply as well as questions and criticisms aired in the rallies as pilot projects for free political debate in the press and in assemblies. Sensitive and intelligent Vietnamese were offered a glimmer of hope that they too might yet have their "Kennedy" by peaceful means, *mutatis mutandis*! But the major concern prior to the Presidential elections was over what the Communists would do.

As the elections drew near there was growing apprehension over a possible major Communist attack on election day. Americans were urged to stay in their homes, and Vietnamese avoided going into the countryside, especially after dark. Communist grenades were thrown in Saigon the Friday and Saturday before the elections, but election day was relatively calm. The government claimed it had nipped a Communist plan to sabotage the elections in Saigon with the arrest of over 2,000 persons about to descend upon the city from the countryside. There were relatively few incidents in the countryside in contrast to the previous (and succeeding) weeks.

On Sunday morning a student appeared at my door to take me around to the polling places. Everything was peaceful and orderly. The police did not allow pictures to be taken, but otherwise they were not obtrusive. The procedure seemed to insure secrecy. My student, like many Vietnamese friends, was a strong critic of the regime, but he seemed ready to vote for Diem, partly out of fear and partly out of conviction that he was obviously more qualified than either opposition candidate for the presidency.

In the ornate, charming Saigon City Hall we had a long chat with the representative of List III, a courageous little man. He said the voting was secret but he expressed doubts about the control over the counting of ballots by a Deputy. He was confident his list would get 80% of the votes. I told him I thought it might get 30% and List II 10% in Saigon, but that these elections should be interpreted a bit like Communist elections. Hence if the President were to get only 60% in relatively free Saigon, I hoped he would take the criticisms expressed by the opposition lists seriously. He complained of government control of the press, insisting that List III should have had a newspaper. He admitted that the Presidential candidate on his list (the Chinese doctor) was too old for the job, but he assumed that the Vice Presidential candidate would play an active role. He said he received no pay for his job and he

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expected he might go to jail after the elections. I told him he was a patriot of a free Viet Nam and that Kennedy had expressed confidence in the people of his country.

That evening I went down to the main square of Saigon where a monumental indicator for the election returns had been erected. Public entertainment was provided in the form of canned Vietnamese jazz over loudspeakers and vaudeville performances on several outdoor stages. The crowds enjoyed the entertainment but they left long before any returns were posted. Even the bars had closed when, at 2:30 A.M., two painters slowly climbed ladders to dub in the results from Saigon, the one district which we knew was relatively free. Only twenty-five Saigonese were there for the event, and the police had orders to keep us almost beyond reading distance of the figures. Among the handful were several students, all supporters of List III.

We cheered at the results: 26.5% of those voting cast their ballots for List III, 9.3% for List II, and the remaining 64.2% for the President's list. Abstentions (which the Communists tried to encourage) totalled 24.6% of the previously announced voting list for Saigon. The figures from the countryside gave overwhelming percentages to the President's list, 89.5% of the votes cast. But the Saigon percentages were a moral victory for the non-Communist opposition and the 146,518 votes cast for List III had significance going beyond numbers. The most Westernized and best educated elements, the intelligentsia, and many of the business and professional people of Saigon indicated peacefully their disaffection with the Diem regime. One-third of the voters of Saigon said "no," despite the pressures for a "yes." This was Saigon's "Vive Kennedy!"—this time lawfully expressed. Would Diem and the United States understand this and be able to act in time?

That was the question the Sunday Morning Visitor and his *ami sûr* discussed at my house on the night after Diem's inauguration for his second term, a conversation punctuated by the noises of the great fireworks display outside. They were seriously interested in a new democratization movement led by a Saigon dentist who had unsuccessfully opposed an official candidate in the 1959 legislative elections. We proposed the liberation of Dr. Dan and other opposition figures as the first plank of a prospective platform, along with freedom of the press, and freedom for the university. Constantly our conversation returned to the question of the impact of the Kennedy administration on South Viet Nam. Would the dentist's movement, like that of the Dean, be ignored by the press and fade out after the initial public announcement of its formation?

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Two days after this discussion I left Saigon. I had been there a bare nine months.

BACK IN NOVEMBER the Sunday Morning Visitor, like many other Vietnamese, was shocked to discover that Kennedy would not take office until January. The designation of a new American Ambassador for the Republic of Viet Nam came only after the inauguration. But the incumbent Ambassador remained in Saigon until after the Vietnamese Presidential elections. He left in early May, consulting in Hawaii for a week with the highly educated new Ambassador, who was fresh from Washington briefings after previous diplomatic experience in Europe with NATO. The Political Affairs Officer served as chargé d'affaires in the interim and later briefed the new Ambassador on diplomatic service in Asia. He was the same Political Affairs Officer who, the previous August, had ordered me to have no contacts with the opposition and who, at a farewell dinner which my Dean gave, talked like a propagandist for the Diem regime and insisted that there had been no change in American policy either towards South Viet Nam or Laos.

As for policy, repeated statements by President Kennedy and also by Prime Minister Macmillan indicated growing Western concern over the deteriorating security situation in South Viet Nam, but there was no indication of a new policy of political intervention. Vice President Johnson did make a point, on his visit to Saigon in June, of conducting an American style political campaign with the man in the street along a major boulevard. This was in marked contrast to the very fleeting outdoor appearances of President Diem during the campaign and especially to the elaborate security precautions utilized by him when he travels the same boulevard on his way to the airport. But Johnson's visit was brief.

The one promising development which I felt I could point to in a letter to the Sunday Morning Visitor after my return was the dispatch to Viet Nam of a special study group led by the distinguished economist, Eugene Staley, accompanied by officials from American governmental departments and agencies concerned with foreign policy towards Viet Nam. The head of the Vietnamese mission meeting with them was none other than my Dean. Together the two groups of experts and officials devised a five-year plan in the economic and military fields predicated on long-term American commitment. While the report has not been made public, while one might remain skeptical of any seventeen-day mission of experts, and while the terms of the new long-range program must be negotiated between the new U. S. Ambassador in Saigon and

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President Diem, and then sincerely put into effect, I do believe that if people like my Dean are supported in its implementation there may be reason for hope.

But the recent action of the American Congress weakened the prospects for a firm long-range commitment to a Vietnamese aid program, and the evidence of large scale Communist military action in recent weeks suggests that military considerations will take priority over political and economic ones in both Vietnamese and American action. Now it is General Maxwell Taylor who visits President Diem to work out a new policy, while the *New York Times* reports on political weaknesses of the South Vietnamese regime. Having failed to work out and implement a policy for South Viet Nam and its neighbors when it first came into office, the new Administration finds itself confronted with what President Diem now calls "a real war" which justifies new emergency powers and implies the need for military assistance.

But more is involved than the question of a change of policy in Washington. Did we and do we now as a people have the talent, the values, and the will to shoulder the responsibility we undertook in 1954 when we helped nearly a million refugees from the North to flee to the South, where we optimistically supported what was to be "free" Viet Nam? I pose this question first to myself. Why didn't I stay on a second year? Why was the exchange program so limited and so inadequately administered? Why didn't the cultural affairs officer know French? Why has American policy neglected contact and communication with the small but highly important intelligentsia of that country? Why don't we send better people out there, people with talent and a sense of public service? Why are the few dedicated and intelligent people who are there reassigned often at the very moment when their understanding of Viet Nam begins to ripen? Where is the sense of duty, of public-mindedness of America and how can it be tapped and mobilized for the exacting demands of our mounting responsibilities in the cold war?

It is easy to reduce the world to cinders. It is hard to fulfill the commitments we have undertaken for non-nuclear, political warfare. We were great when we welcomed the refugees from North Viet Nam in 1954. Can we yet sustain their hopes for a free Viet Nam? Can talented and dedicated Americans meet one another in Saigon and know why they are there—wanting to stay and to communicate with the finest elements of a spirited people?

Raymond Roseliep

HOMILY FOR ROBERT

Oh run in the hill from the red fox,
red as the fleshy dahlia, fire red,
before the light will sow your morning
with motion heavier than your blood.

Step lively through the sober bracken,
gird your skin with an alb of shadow
when the fox moves in open pasture
gracefully as a girl or willow.

Youngest of all my friends, outstripping
this boyhood ritual of your hill,
dance these Isaian coals I have strewn,
or the flaming fox will kill, will kill.

John Haag

ONE MORE VERSION OF AN OLD VISION

The eye, a window through which I look,
Looks through a window washed with rain
And finds, beyond the mottled pane,
A window world through which I look
Into the hollow eye again.

George Keithley

CHOICES

Fortune, nor matron or
Mistress, merely
This woman of this street,
My hands once tore
At your bosom. Discreet,
You stilled what oaths I swore.

I cannot strike your ear
With curses and
Remember you bade me
Embrace your sere
Flesh, or leave. O lady,
Lady, old hag, my dear.

Welton Smith

IF I COULD HOLD YOU FOR LIGHT

and have your radiance light
this waste I dig through, searching
for the gall-covered words
in which to plant my fear and
ignite my despondencies
exploding them to turmoil and ache;

or send your poise to stroll through
burning glances that parch my flesh
in their seconds of hot indifference
and send me digging deeper
into this refreshing slime,

I would not be satisfied.

IN REVIEW

THE GOOD LIFE IN RECENT FICTION

Anne Halley

NEW NOVELS are exciting. The writer's face, eyes searching the sky perhaps, a publisher's serious welcome, an eminent critic's pat, the titles which at first tend to jumble together embarrassingly (why not, *Out of the Woods*, *The Tiny Cell*, or *The Years Apart*?), all serve their purpose: confronted by clean pages and neat type I feel the beginning traveller's tentative and queasy joy. Where are we now? What new lives open? I am pleased if the country turns out to be one I can recognize; I am the old-fashioned, even furtive middle class reader—not extinct, not after all turned to Sociology and How-To texts—who looks to the novelist for guidance, for insight into the puzzling here-and-now, for a view clearer than my own daily one, perceptions sharper than my own confused ones, about the life we live. I mean us, people in the world, with birth and death, work, marriage, and war and bombs, and all the endless, repeating variations. Here are some new lives then, and let us first be grateful for them. They are the witnesses: our world is still going on.

These four novels* are about people ending old lives and beginning anew. Mr. Thorp's story concerns college students in their senior year, their worry over family and sex, their fears and choices and hopes, as they set out to enter the "forest" of adult life and responsibility. Miss Sarton and Mr. Malamud write about new college teachers—respectively a young woman recovering from a broken engagement and a reformed drunkard—each hopefully setting out to teach literature to the worried young. Mrs. Winston's characters are true refugees—a Viennese psychiatrist and his wife almost destitute in New York after the war—and an American engineer, the doctor's patient, to whom a new life is opened—if ambiguously—on the wreckage of the old. We might call them collectively novels of transition and redefinition: we may expect to see the characters tested, as they test the society and its institutions, and try to find their place. The novels have that much in common: the innocent eye's advantage, a relatively unsophisticated beginner set against both the revealed and the underground complexities of the *status quo*.

As guidebooks to our world (for that is how I choose to see them) these

*Roderick Thorp, *Into the Forest* (New York: Random House, 1961), \$4.95; Bernard Malamud, *A New Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1961), \$4.95; May Sarton, *The Small Room* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1961), \$3.95; Clara Winston, *The Hours Together* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1961), \$4.95.

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novels are depressing, although not without some redeeming hope. There is little to be said in favor of the society which the heroes and heroines may seek to join and, in the process, to reform. Mr. Thorp's college world is one of joyless emotional brutality: fraternity brothers scheming to rule the house, strewn garbage on rival porches; dreary parties in which the principals may be drunken fraternity louts and pitiable "dates," or equally loutish fags and little magazine writers going around with unwashed aggressive women. The fraternity boys apparently plan to enter advertising or business; the Bohemians plan nothing much; the hero, who has seen service in the Korean war and reached a kind of maturity, plans to become a teacher, to marry and rear a family.

This admirable and certainly not grandiose ambition is, I think, significant. The good life nowadays is a small, limited one: the vision includes what may be one of the few jobs left in which one seems to work independently at something that may do good, and an all-important relationship with a wife or husband. The good man carves out a tiny niche for himself: the job which combines doing something worthwhile with what amounts to a kind of voluntary poverty, a stepping-away from certain kinds of competition and the possibilities of power, while remaining respectably within the framework of society; the wife of your choice, whose qualities are calculated to make the marriage important, more stressful and exciting than other, outside areas of experience. If the adult world is indeed a dangerous, amoral forest where many fail, as the future business freebooter anti-hero of *Into the Forest* envisions it in a moment of insight, then the hero perhaps makes the wise, if not particularly adventurous choice. And it may be adventure enough that he chooses to marry a Jewish girl whose possessive mother is dead-set against the union.

What is most striking in Mr. Thorp's novel is the quality which characterizes most of these young people's sexual experiences. It might be called the calculated use of sex as power and as compensation—that is, as aggressive, unaffectionate behavior. These boys and girls seduce and use each other for ego-gratification, to make up for other failures, to degrade themselves or humiliate another, to "score" or feel big, but rarely for love or even out of honest curiosity. Thus the hero must purge his future wife of the effects of two unhappy affairs, experiences in which she has been made to lose—not her virtue—but her self-esteem. Although we are assured, finally, that the most patently corrupt character is "sick," it is saddening to see freedom of choice and action so generally debased. Because there seem to be no worthwhile goals or possibilities for meaningful action, besides the hero's odd-ball choice to teach, the young Americans of the fifties seem to be motivated mainly by fear and contempt, both of themselves and of each other.

Teachers and students do not really live in the same world, perhaps; Mr. Thorp's students take exams and read books, discuss ideas, but they are not troubled by live professors. The hero, a practice-teacher, can think of teaching

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as a job done by himself, in a classroom, concerned with a subject. For him teaching is not yet a profession to be joined, an institution to adhere to. The two novels about teachers, on the other hand, necessarily put the teacher squarely into his—or her—world. The world includes not only students (four individual students in two books, and an undifferentiated mass called Freshmen, or something like Composition 1, or Literature 300), but other teachers, ranks, salaries, administrations, power groups, schisms, meetings, and regulations—in short, a complex and often confining organization. In the organized pattern, students are names, faces, minds, and possibly problems which the teacher must try to solve, always while remaining within the self-preserving bounds of the organization.

Both Levin in *A New Life* and Lucy Winter in *The Small Room* manage to rock the boat considerably during the course of a first academic year; the manner and matter of their activity is conditioned by the kind of organization which they join, and—in a slightly different way—by the authors' differing conceptions of the possibilities of character. Ironically enough, the comic novel set in what one hopes is a caricature of a state college, ends seriously for both hero and reader; the apparently serious book, which deals with a laudably idealistic intellectual community, leaves one with the irritating sense of having read yet another Alumnae Bulletin puff about the good, grey professor we all remember, another welcoming or graduating speech about the liberal arts. There are serious wrongs, evils, at happy Cascadia College in the 1950's and the staff, the students, and the voters are probably prepared to fight to maintain those evils: thus, Levin is given a situation in which action is possible. Whatever is wrong at Appleton, Miss Sartor's female college, is so inextricably joined to that institution's virtues, that the heroine—like the other inmates—vacillates, berates herself, and tries for adjustment.

Mr. Malamud's conception of character also helps to make action possible for Levin. Levin manages to be both ridiculous and heroic; he is weak—as some fairy tale heroes are—yet fated to act, with a sense of mission; from the first he exists outside the glibly organized cause-and-effect context in which character is too often limited and action too often explained by diluted psychiatric concepts. He has been a drunkard, *not* an alcoholic. Therefore he can be a reformer and idealist, not a smasher of fatherly authority; he can be a lover, not a sex-partner or a substitute or an image-hunter.

On the other hand, Lucy Winter—who is probably not so much heroine as "limited point of view"—has a set of problems which have brought her to Appleton as a somewhat ambivalent teacher. That she does not become more than the sum of her problems is partly due to the lack of action in the novel—teaching Thoreau, assigning term papers, reading the *Iliad*, is work, but the classroom drama, the drawing-out of undergraduate ideas and the teacher's peroration—unless the ideas are themselves of great interest and related to the rest of the novel—seem to me at best matters for a teachers'

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seminar. Lucy Winters is also less than convincing because Miss Sarton—in accord with a fragmented, explaining kind of psychology—has her heroine commit herself to every college faction with sympathy, and at last brings on the *deus ex machina*, the psychiatrist.

The difference in character conception can be shown in a central comparison. Both Levin and Lucy Winter encounter cases of that academic horror, the plagiarist. Levin's plagiarist is a sturdy sinner who hates his teacher and will not confess. When Levin realizes that he cannot sustain the relationship of hunter and quarry, in which both parties suffer intimately together, he abandons his search for absolute proof. Levin judges the situation by present human rather than institutional standards: he is finally interested neither in punishment nor cure, although he wants to go on teaching the student. Lucy Winter and her student plagiarist, however, remain in a context in which suffering is rationalized and institutionalized, rather than felt. The offender has to be expelled or, preferably, saved by psychiatric treatment. The difference is, of course, only one of emphasis: Mr. Malamud's emphasis is on the felt effect of an action on the relationship between student and teacher, Miss Sarton's is always an after-the-fact explanation.

That the teacher may need to disregard his own human needs and responses in order to be allowed to do his work, can be seen most clearly in Levin's progress. Equipped with a new beard, a nightmare past, a master's degree and some fine ideals about the humanities, Levin leaves New York for the West—Cascadia College, in the mountains, not far from the Pacific. He enters his new world full of hope and full of misgivings about his own worthiness, his own ability to live up to the high calling he has chosen. What he finds is both funny and surprising—then suddenly predictable. The college is not the liberal arts college he expected, but a vocational-technical service center; he is to teach grammar and composition, not literature; his colleagues are for the most part amiable Rotarian types, interested in hunting and fishing, in nursing the football team through academic requirements, in coffee breaks and in promotions; the composition course is ossified, buried in over-administration, the chairman's ancient grammar text, childish routines of curving and grade rivalries, teamwork for detecting student cheating. Little or no attention is paid to Levin's hard-won humane ideals.

The department reveals itself to Levin mainly through Gilley, main candidate for the chairmanship, a pursuer of hobbies, a time-server whose intellectual activity consists of cutting pictures from *Life*. Gilley is incapable of taking a stand on any issue, but bends with every breath of criticism that touches the department; he will offend no one and nothing, except his staff's intellectual honesty. Gilley is also the man who chooses Levin and gives him his private office and keys—that is, literally invests him with the rights and privileges of college teaching. And in return counts on him for an easy vote in the coming chairmanship battle. Gilley is a kind of comic monster—for example, in the confrontation in which he instructs Levin in fishing techniques to prove to the "outsider" that he cannot understand manly Cascadia

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—and he is also the husband of Pauline, dissatisfied with herself, barren, destined to become important in Levin's new life.

At Cascadia Levin undergoes sexual as well as wildly comic intellectual and moral trials. He has found no friends, no place in a community, but a series of grotesque episodes make vivid his isolation, his need, and its frustration. The waitress on the horseblanket in someone's barn, the aging remedial composition teacher in the office, the student at the motel—through these images, which might animate any celibate teacher's dream-life—Levin moves towards sudden, surprising fulfillment. He meets Pauline Gilley in a wood and she gives herself, while he marvels at his pastoral good fortune; their affair becomes love—an act of choice, commitment, and affirmation.

In the logic of the novel, this act of affirmation, Levin's decision to love rather than merely use, brings about his dismissal and his loss of the chairmanship, for which he had become a brave reform candidate. In that candidacy and pursuit of the good, he has become detective, sneaky collector of secret documents, rifler of locked files, just as in his pursuit of true love he must be the adulterer and marriage-wrecker. In the process he finds that the rules have often been broken before, but never openly, never for the sake of truth. In the end Levin has triumphed over Gilley: Pauline is pregnant at last, and the department has changed, although Levin can no longer work in it. But Gilley too wins something. Levin has promised him to go and teach no more; in return for the Gilleys' two adopted children, Levin promises to give up college teaching. Gilley, perhaps rightly, considers Levin a danger to the profession. Thus Levin and his chosen love begin again, at the end: they set out like pioneers or explorers, but with two children and the unborn baby to answer for.

The good life of the dedicated teacher, then, is not necessarily a haven, an escape from power struggles and meanness, from the exploitation of human relationships in a tightly organized, manipulative society. There is, however, a world of greater sweetness and light, a possible community for teachers, provided only that they can live in a tight, somewhat hysterical, continually soul-searching, one-sex country of the mind: the women's college. The dilemmas that rock Miss Sartons' Appleton—and the new instructor—are as potentially laughable as those faced by Levin, but here we must look at them without a hint of comedy. Is plagiarism a crime or a symptom of emotional breakdown? Should an expensive women's college that strives for intellectual excellence employ a resident psychiatrist? Are women scholars necessarily emotional cripples? These questions, and others like them, are debated endlessly, with help from the fashionable poets at crucial points, over tea or martinis in little rooms; from such discussions teachers go to talk to their classes, to a student conference, to a meeting with the president for more talk. When not doing these things, grading papers, or sleeping in total exhaustion, the heroine apparently talks to herself.

The Small Room does ask many of the right questions about learning and teaching, and especially about the education of the upper-middle-class girl

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who is most likely to attend Appleton. That the questions are all resolved rather glibly by off-stage "help" for the student plagiarist and increased tea-time insight for her teachers—who seem to have felt an insufficiency of love—is disappointing. On the other hand, in this adjustable world, no one is fired or expelled, no one resigns permanently, everyone learns something.

A recurrent problem among both teachers and students at Appleton is felt to be the lack of a father; it may be significant, also, that the one child-bearing wife there, an Italian, is seen by the others as a natural force, relentlessly "intuitive," not a faculty wife but a sexual "tiger." Moreover, the broken engagement which Lucy mourns, came to grief on some vital disparity between male-objective and female-intuitive modes of thought and feeling. At the end, Lucy seems to be genteelly in love with the prize female medievalist of Appleton. Unlike Mr. Thorp's unhappy young people, and most unlike Mr. Malamud's Levin, she has gained a kind of community—although to the outsider it may look more like asylum.

Mrs. Winston's admirable novel takes us away from the academy, though not from student and teacher, nor from the unpleasing realities of our world. Part of the matter of the novel is the relationship of psychiatrist to patient, and the process of the patient's self-exploration; the doctor is, of course, the teacher. While the doctor teaches the engineer to value himself and his humanity, Mrs. Winston allows us to explore two marriages: that of the doctor—an ideal acted out in the face of disintegration and despair—and that of his patient—a desperate, disintegrating exchange of commodities devalued by use and possession. Thus *The Hours Together* completes the pattern which I have tried to outline: Mr. Thorp's young hero shows us the good man's hope—a useful, fairly safe, idealistic job and marriage. Mr. Malamud and Miss Sarton, in differing ways, demonstrate the difficulties and limitations which the "good" work—say, the teacher's calling in our society—places in the way of the aspiring member of the academy. Mrs. Winston's novel, then, explores the other condition necessary for the good life, the important private relationship, marriage. But marriages, set unreflectively adrift in an anonymous traditionless mass society whose values are acquisitive and utilitarian, may turn out to be ugly traps for people who come to hate themselves and each other, as the engineer and his wife do, while the union that exists wholly outside of the going society—that of the refugee doctor and his wife—and finds no relation to any group becomes a grim struggle to retain value and meaning—a struggle which may be too great for the lonely participants. The doctor's prescription, to cultivate "inwardness," can change his patient's unformed life, but "inwardness" does not save Luise, the doctor's suffering wife, from a suicide of despair.

The relationships in *The Hours Together* are, I think, brilliantly played off against each other. As Morton Kersh, through the psychiatrist's probing and exhortation—and weighty example—begins to rise to a new conception

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of himself and human possibility in general, the psychiatrist's wife begins to identify herself with the patient's purposeless misery. As Kersh begins to answer the question, "Who are you?" Luise too searches her past and present life fearfully, to find that in a strange country, deprived of home and friends, she no longer knows the answer. The possibility of total destruction, the suffering which she accepted while she thought her son had been taken by the Nazis, has left her literally wounded; although the son returned unharmed, the mother bears a scar—and she no longer believes in survival. It is the doctor's passion for control, for ratiocination, which keeps both Kersh and Luise temporarily in dependent suspension—he supports them and keeps them going with precepts of order; their compliance, of course, supports him. When either wife or patient shows independent needs the doctor throws a tantrum; he cannot tolerate disloyalty.

Thus, out of his own dubiously motivated need, the doctor does effect at least partial cures: the miserably married engineer, suffering impotence and afraid of his own suppressed violence, does change his life. Kersh sees in the doctor, and in his glimpses of the doctor's married life, exactly the ideal of significance and dignity which he needs to find—it is of course also an image which requires the audience, demands a believer, to be ideal.

The strength of *The Hours Together* then is in its combination of pattern and texture: a pattern of skillfully worked-out ironic revelation and reversal is combined with what seems to me a compassionate and precise rendering of relationships in action. We see—for instance—what happens between husband and wife or father and son, and the ordinary domestic squalor, the mixed feelings, the child's body, the rumpled bed, the spilled bits of rice, manage to be specific, true—to carry their meaning while remaining recognizable facts of life.

The problem that brings the engineer to the doctor is impotence. Kersh and his wife live in mutual hate and frustration, but their frustration is not only an individual problem. It is as much an effect of the corruption of a relationship and an institution by manipulative and consumer values in the society as a whole—Kersh for instance can compare his wedding to a Super-Market opening—as it is a failure of individual love. But freed from his machine-like, devouring wife, Kersh can presumably recover. In Mr. Thorp's novel too there was a suggestion that the man ostensibly inside society—the moral bankrupt—may be impotent. Mr. Malamud's corrupt Gilley is sterile, but Levin, the Outsider, can father a child. Our current novelists (contrary to American tradition) seem to assign full potency only to the critic, the Outside man. If they have not yet been able to find for him a somewhat larger sphere of action—if they cannot in good conscience move him out of the bed and fully into the narrowing world—that is a problem which should be looked to.

THE WOUND IN THE HEART: TWO VOLUMES ON THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Allen Guttman

ON THE MORNING of July 19, 1936, General Francisco Franco y Bahamonde flew from exile in the Canary Islands to rebellion in Spanish Morocco. Two days earlier, the garrisons at Ceuta, Melilla, and Tetuán had begun the revolt against the Spanish Republic. General Franco and his fellow conspirators in Morocco and in Spain hoped that their *pronunciamento* would topple the government as *pronunciamentos* had overthrown past regimes. It did not; and the Spanish nation collapsed into thirty-two months of civil war. For Spaniards dedicated to building a liberal democracy on the ruins of the Bourbon monarchy, the war was a catastrophe. For the generation that came of age in the 1930's, in countries other than Spain, the Spanish Civil War was a personal tragedy. Today, men and women too young to remember the Spanish war look back upon it as the last great cause. With the publication of Hugh Thomas's book,* we have, for the first time, a reasonably accurate, comprehensive, and impartial history of the war.

Thomas has worked through the published and unpublished documents, and has supplemented them by an extraordinary number of interviews with Ramón Serrano Suñer, Julio Álvarez del Vayo, and other survivors of the conflict. From his sources, Thomas has compiled a day-by-day, and often an hour-by-hour, chronicle of the struggle. Beginning with the debates in the *Cortes*, June 16, 1936, wherein each of the Republic's leaders denounced the others and warned of impending disaster, Thomas adds details to Gerald Brenan's brilliant book on the background of the war. He sketches in the international repercussions of the struggle, discusses the intervention of Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union, and gives a detailed account of the internal dissensions of the Republic which, as much as the superiority of German and Italian arms, led to the Nationalists' triumph.† Thomas makes an effort to include the literary response to the war; in the manner of Trevelyan quoting Shakespeare on the Tudors, Thomas quotes Auden and Day Lewis on the Loyalists. It is, however, as the historian of the siege of Toledo's Alcázar, of the defense of Madrid, of the Battle of Guadalajara, of the war in the Basque country, that Thomas—sometime lecturer at the Royal Military College (Sandhurst)—is at his best. The book, like the war it chronicles, is dramatic. It is necessary to add that it is not quite the historical masterpiece it has been hailed.

In the first place, there are errors. Thomas confuses the Second (Socialist)

* *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961). \$8.50.

† Although the *Falange Española* was obviously a Fascist organization, not all partisans of Franco's *Movimiento Nacional* were Fascists, and the Republic was certainly not "Communist." Most scholars prefer the terms "Nationalist" and "Loyalist."

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International with the Third (Communist) International. He (inaccurately) adds Salvador de Madariaga to Joaquín Costa, Ángel Ganivet, and other members of the "Generation of 1898." There never was a "conversion . . . to the Republic" by Winston Churchill, whose uninformed condemnation of the Republic's "communism" (August 10, 1936) was transferred almost without revision into *The Gathering Storm* (1948). It was Joris Ivens, not Ernest Hemingway, who directed the documentary film, *The Spanish Earth*. The correct title of Florence Farmborough's inane book is *Life and People in National Spain*. It is, perhaps, easy to mistype "Lucien Marivault" for "Lucien Maulvault," but one can scarcely read such silly novels as Maulvault's *El Requeté* and *Glaieul Noir* and still list them—in a bibliography which includes a section on fiction—among the "Leading Contemporary Pamphlets and Polemics, Etc." More seriously, Thomas lists David Cattell's excellent monographs among his sources, but ignores Cattell's definitive analysis of Spanish Communism and accepts as authentic the forged documents which "prove" that the Comintern plotted a revolution in Spain for the summer of 1936.

There are, as this use of forged documents suggests, other instances of pro-Nationalist bias. Although Thomas has *not* written a polemic and does *not* accept the Nationalists' denials of the massacre at Badajoz or the experiment in terror at Guernica, he *does* accept at face value their accounts of "Red Terror" in Republican Spain. He quotes at length and with few qualifications from the Nationalists' official history of the war. He prints excerpts from a wild speech attributed to José García Oliver (anarchist Minister of Justice); how many readers look to the footnote to see that the quotation is taken without comment from Berryer's utterly untrustworthy *Red Justice in Spain*? Discussing the Republic's indictment of enemy atrocities, Thomas is rightly skeptical and safeguards his narrative with "allegedly" and its equivalents. Discussing the Nationalists' charges that the "Reds" murdered 85,940, Thomas accepts the figure and piles on the atrocity stories. He suggests that "there is just a possibility that the figure was played down to avoid giving too terrible an impression abroad of Spanish characteristics." It is hard to believe that men who utilized the obscene and hysterical propaganda of the admittedly drunken General Gonzalo Queipo de Llano ever "played down" their charges of "Red Terror."*

Considering such instances of bias, one wonders that Harold Livermore—a leading authority on Spain (and the book's reviewer in the *Saturday Review*)—finds Thomas too willing to listen to the arguments of the Communists. But Livermore is correct. Thomas is hurried and unfair to the anti-Stalinists in his chapter on the "May Days" (May 3-7, 1937, when the Stalinists in Barcelona

* Queipo de Llano, broadcasting from Radio Seville, was the most notorious propagandist of the war. When Ellery Sedgwick termed him, in a laudatory article, "The Patron Saint of Andalusia," the resulting fracas contributed to Sedgwick's resignation from the editorship of the *Atlantic Monthly*.

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suppressed their Trotskyite opponents and seriously weakened the Anarchists). His portrayals of the anti-Communists among the Republicans are frequently cheap and cartoon-like: President Manuel Azaña, a liberal, is sketched as a sexual pervert; Defense Minister Indalecio Prieto, a Socialist, is vilified as the "fountainhead of . . . defeatism."

Reconsidering the whole question of bias, one concludes that the seeming contradictions derive from a basic difficulty: Thomas is committed to neither side and to no faction. He has no position from which to judge, and he makes little attempt to assess the general significance of the Spanish war. The narrative moves from day to day, from build-up to battle, from cabinet crisis to cabinet change, from colorful escapade to atrocity story. Chapters frequently become *collages*, and the reader flounders in the paste. There are concessionary paragraphs on such topics as "the general implications of the Spanish Civil War in the rest of the world," but Thomas is far more interested in military history than in political theory.

Political implications are surely worth more extended treatment. Consider, for instance, the role of the Soviet Union. Thomas discusses the Comintern's Seventh Congress and Stalin's decision to strive for a "Popular Front" of all anti-Fascists. He shows how Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain vetoed French aid to Spain and thus, in effect, forced the Republicans to rely upon the Soviet Union. In scattered chapters, he comments on the growing influence of the Communists in Spain, on the suppression by them of the Trotskyite *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista*, on the final anti-Communist coup of Colonel Segismundo Casado. But Thomas never confronts the issue squarely: Was the program of the Popular Front a betrayal of the Republic's ideals, or was it the only practical ideological compromise? Premier Juan Negrín and Foreign Minister Julio Álvarez del Vayo believed it was the latter. They adopted the program of the Popular Front, replaced the militias with a professional army, suppressed dissent, and stopped the social revolution begun by the Anarchists and the radical Socialists. They sought by their moderation (i.e., their espousal of bourgeois democracy) to win the support of Neville Chamberlain and Cordell Hull. They failed. And, paradoxically, had they succeeded diplomatically and triumphed militarily, they would nonetheless have failed ideologically, for a victory won on the basis of the Popular Front would have meant a return to the *status quo ante bellum* and to the desperate discontent that bred Fascism in the first place. In terms of the American Civil War, the triumph of the Popular Front would have been a Northern victory without the Emancipation Proclamation.

George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* is a tract for all times because Orwell can write of ideology and of "morasses of mud" and "the yellow water in the trench bottoms; and men's exhausted faces, unshaven, streaked with mud and blackened to the eyes with smoke." André Malraux's novel, *Man's Hope*, is magnificent because Malraux conveys the confused desperation of battle and

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dramatizes the anguished debate between those who urged the apocalyptic transformation of society and those who sought to travel by stages to utopia. Hugh Thomas seems uninterested in the questions confronted by Orwell and Malraux. In Appendix III, he catalogues the minutiae of "Soviet Aid to Spain, As Reported by the German Military Attaché" at Ankara.

Perhaps Thomas's refusal to generalize is a merit. Too many books have, with little or no accurate data, characterized the Spanish war as the conflict of Christianity versus Communism or of Democracy versus Fascism. Neither rubric is adequate, and—despite its weaknesses—we can hope that Hugh Thomas's book will inform future judgments.

IDEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS are, for Sandor Voros, quite literally questions of life or death. His commitments led him to Spain, and his book* begins upon the battlefield:

It could have been eleven in the morning or one in the afternoon, it was hard to tell which by the hot Spanish sun. The last glimpse I'd had of the map was two nights before. . . . I tried to recall where due north was but couldn't. . . . It felt still early and a long day lay ahead.

Then, German gunners begin to lay down a patterned barrage.

The artillery was beginning to box me in. . . . Four more shells and it would be over, a matter of two minutes or less. I was going to die. I was going to be killed right here. I was going to die all alone, in faraway Spain, on a mountainside the name of which I did not even know.

The rest of the book leads to that mountainside.

The road began in revolutionary Hungary on the eve of the Horthy dictatorship. Surviving those adventurous days, Voros came to America in 1921 and worked in New York's garment shops. Cheated by employers who exploited his hunger, hopeful that society could somehow be improved, he became a member of the Communist Party. His account of life as an American Communist is often comic (as when he describes the misadventures of the impoverished Party's first transatlantic telephone call) and often cryptic (as when he notes that the radical who cursed Central Park's police as "bastard breeds" is today "the Chief Warden of all the concentration camps in Hungary"). Unlike many Stalinists, Voros maintained a critical view of the Party and its functionaries; unlike most apostates, Voros is unashamed of the ideals he lived by. He writes well of the Party and of the Great Depression, but he is at his best when he remembers Spain.

As chief of the Commissariat of the XVth International Brigade, of which Americans formed one battalion, he fought in Aragón and took part in the disastrous offensive across the Ebro River. Like Orwell, he was determined to record the facts of war and to avoid the misrepresentations of the *dulce-et-decorum* view of combat. The prose is often flat, but at moments the descriptions rival Orwell's:

* *American Commissar* (Philadelphia: The Chilton Co., 1961). \$4.95.

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The field is hazy with the blackish-blue picric smoke which shakes and shimmies in the wind, the gunners look like gnomes in the flashes of their guns. The bombers are back again and I drop back into the fox-hole, a big fragment the size of a stove lid swishes by my head as I duck, this time I'm really scared.

Voros was frightened, but it was not fear that undid him. It was the "strait-jacket" (the word is his) of the Party Line. He saw Robert Minor, a *Daily Worker* reporter, become hysterical when Voros tried to report American losses: "Not a word of this must be permitted to leak out in America, do you hear? What are you trying to do, demoralize the people back home?" He saw men like Joe Dallet and Dave Doran and John Gates become "drunk with power" and with "the knowledge that here in Spain . . . they were in a position to enforce their dictates by jail sentences and even [by] the firing squad."

Despite his disillusionment with the Party, he stayed and fought. He flattened himself on the hard, dry Spanish earth and watched helplessly as German and Italian bombers combined the winning of one war with the practicing for another. He saw Neville Chamberlain wash his hands of the whole dirty business, and, in the phrase of Edna St. Vincent Millay, he "saw Spain die." When Premier Negrín sent the volunteers home in a quixotic attempt to force the reciprocal retirement of General Franco's "volunteer" armies, Voros returned to the United States, protested vainly against the *Daily Worker's* false reports on Spain, and, reluctantly, left the Party for good.

Europeans such as Arthur Koestler and Gustav Regler have written more profoundly on Communism and on the Spanish war, but no American volunteer has equalled the vividness and the honesty of *American Commissar*. Other American volunteers have written more extensively of Spain, but their accounts are too often deformed by the exigencies of Comintern policy or by the frenzy of their rejection of the Party. Of the many non-Communists who fought in the Lincoln Battalion, not one has yet—to my knowledge—written his reminiscences of Pingarrón Hill, of Jarama, or the retreat from Teruel. Before Voros wrote, there was no autobiography to complement Hemingway's novel and the forgotten poems of Edwin Rolfe. Now there is.

Writing in 1946, Albert Camus had this to say of the Spanish Civil War:

It is now nine years that men of my generation have had Spain within their hearts. Nine years that they have carried it with them like an evil wound. It was in Spain that men learned that one can be right and yet be beaten, that force can vanquish spirit, that there are cases where courage is not its own recompense. It is this, doubtless, which explains why so many men the world over feel the Spanish drama as a personal tragedy.

Although Sandor Voros came home alive, he is one of those men who carry Spain like an evil wound within their hearts. Had Hugh Thomas been an-

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other, had he shared Camus' anguished sense of the meaning of the Spanish war, he might have lost his detachment and compiled another partisan polemic. He might, on the other hand, have written a book to set beside Thucydides' history of that other struggle between an imperfect democracy and an authoritarian society.

REAL AND SURREAL: THE DEBT TO NATHANAEL WEST

Marc Ratner

JAMES F. LIGHT's book about Nathanael West* is an "interpretative study" and as such has a number of virtues as criticism. It does not purport to be the "final word" on West, it is a demonstration of the best techniques in analytical criticism, and it proves the kinship of West's work to the pessimistic strain in American literature. Light's theme is the quest for inner security and order undertaken by West's heroes. They make their way through a world of violence and corruption which turns their dreams into nightmares, their hopes into sickening frustration. After some preliminary biographical material, Light examines each of the novels with a thoroughness in detailed explication which accomplishes what this method of criticism should: the recreation of a work of art. This method of close textual explication reveals West's skill in his manipulation of dream and symbol in order to create a complex reality beyond reality. Light also interjects some pointed remarks in an all too brief chapter on West's Jewishness, which, he believes, is the source of West's peculiar rage for order. This is a perceptive observation. To it I would add that while most contemporary Jewish writers (Light lists Saul Bellow, J. D. Salinger, Arthur Miller and Herman Wouk) achieve an affirmation at the end of their quest, West does not.

Though there is some new biographical material on West, it must of necessity be limited since Light has not had access to the material held by S. J. Perelman, West's literary executor. Despite this limitation, Light has turned up a good deal of new data about West's years at Brown, his "exile" in Paris, his experiences in the hotel business in New York and his final period in Hollywood. At college West followed the pattern of several American writers by being an indifferent classroom student who read widely in unsigned literature. He read Dostoyevski, Joyce, and the French Symbolists, all of whom influenced his work. At Brown and after, during his experiment in expatriation, West was strongly affected by Catholic mysticism, French Surrealism and Freud. The effects of all these movements and writers are obvious in his first two novels, *The Dream Life of Balso Snell* and *Miss Lonelyhearts*.

* *Nathanael West* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1961). \$4.75.

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Balso Snell, which he began at Brown, is a description of the artist's encounter with the dream of art. In the course of the novel West satirizes the concept of the priesthood of art even to the point of parodying the last paragraph in *The Portrait of the Artist*, which is the *locus classicus* of the concept. It is my belief that West was able to ridicule Joyce's pretentiousness because he was both cynical and idealistic about art. Certainly another aspect of this double view emerges, it seems to me, in *Miss Lonelyhearts*, in which West presents the views of both his Grand Inquisitor and his Christ with equal conviction. Shrike, the cynical editor who impales his victim on the thorns of reality, and Miss Lonelyhearts, the thwarted advice-to-the-lovelorn editor who has a Christ-complex, are both defeated by a world too sentimental to be cynical and too brutal to understand love. This double view—that of the cynic-idealist—along with the surreal grotesqueries of character and situation gives West's work its originality. The link for West between the real and the surreal, however, was the death of dreams. In *Balso Snell* the dream of art fails; in *Miss Lonelyhearts* the Christ dream collapses; and in *A Cool Million* the American Dream deteriorates. In *A Cool Million* West's Horatio Alger hero becomes involved in the political struggles of the day, a chamber of American horrors, in which we see the Longs, Pelleys, Coughlins and the fascist groups of the thirties that thrived on the dissatisfaction and misery of the depression. In his examination of *A Cool Million*, Light provides much of the necessary background material of that time. He emphasizes West's awareness of the Fascist threat to America but points out that for West the root of the problem lay in the corruption of all dreams—most especially the American Dream. Light's book is a provocative examination of the world and time of Nathanael West, an estimable study of an important writer. Not the least of its merits is its ability to engender further speculation on West and his relation to certain recent writers, who, confronted with a fantastic society, attempt to find some order in chaos. I would like to devote the rest of my remarks to a comparison of West's work with that of some of these writers.

Perhaps the best place for me to start is with West's last novel, *The Day of the Locust*, which incorporates much of the earlier three novels, and which provides a comprehensive basis for understanding West's connection with American writing today. In *The Day of the Locust* West turned his attention to that powerful source of corrupt dreams, Hollywood. In his later two novels, he changed his material from the individual autodreams of the artist and saint to those of the illusory world of modern social man; but the change did not affect the ultimate resolution of all of West's novels: escape from the dream that men call "the real world." Each of his heroes attempts to find a substitute dream, each of which finally fails. Balso finds in the purely physical an escape from the dream of art, but in the novel itself we find only an inconclusive dadaist ending. As for the others, Miss Lonelyhearts, Lemuel Pitkin and Tod Hackett, they find their only escape from the misery of existence and their substitute dreams in death, martyrdom and insanity. West's questing

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heroes follow a pattern of frustration and violent despair, surrounded by that same "foul dust" which floated in the wake of Jay Gatsby's dream. Their world is limited but not invalid.

In West's surreal world his heroes are tragic but the cosmos which surrounds them does not permit them to enact a tragedy. The situation is recognizable indeed; it is the dilemma of the twentieth century American. Nurtured in a culture that exalts the man of action, he discovers that he cannot act. The writer in America, if he is to reflect life within such a society, must involve himself in this dilemma. He cannot remove himself by saying this is a world I never made, it is not my world, it is too grotesque and unreal to have any meaning. Phillip Roth in *Commentary* (March, 1961) examined some of the difficulties of the writer in America who is faced with such a society and compelled to turn for material to his past, his family circle, or his personal struggle to survive. None of these alternatives offers much of a solution to the writer who wants to avoid the extremities of either the documentary novel of social change where the characters may lose their identities, or the novel of self-identification in which the society has no value or significance. Unfortunately the best writers in our time are not explicitly concerned with the current dilemma of man and they have left the field to the superficial novelists. This lack of concern stems, in part, from a distrust of the more strident voices of social protest in the thirties. West's appeal is that he appears uncommitted to the literature of social protest. To some extent this view is correct, for he did turn most of his attention to the distorted dreams and grotesque characters of the American Nightmare rather than to the social revolution that was taking place around him. Actually though, West did mirror many of the social conflicts of his time while managing to go beyond to more fundamental matters. In this respect he might well be contrasted with some of the American writers who as often as not are so intent on their autobiographical material that they ignore everything else.

The unfortunate result of the limited view of the autobiographical writers is that they have allowed the slick obvious writers to establish themselves as spokesmen of the social scene. Writers like Herman Wouk and Sloan Wilson are deceptive in their "realism." They appeal to the superficial standards of their public, and the sense of guilt or responsibility in their novels is based on societal rather than human values. The hero of *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* solves one problem of conscience by sending \$100 every month to his illegitimate son in Italy; the fall of Marjorie Morningstar is marked by her indulgence in shellfish. Inner states of consciousness and the complex psychological motivations which make for individuality of character are lacking, so that the characters become unintentional examples of everything which is worn out in middle-class society.

Having left modern society in the reliable hands of the defenders of middle-class morality, some of the better writers have retired into themselves—

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only to become like those autobiographical writers in the *New Yorker*, whose fine talents seem often to be serving superficial ends. The problem in autobiographical writing, of course, is that of knowing when a writer's subjective reality has meaning for other men. The autobiographical writers are not *obscure* in meaning, however, for there is often an air of the commonplace about such writing. The important fact is that in going back to themselves, they don't go deeply enough. Herbert Gold's earliest work, *The Man Who Was Not With It*, still stands as a minor classic of post-war American writing, but his more clearly autobiographical narratives, *The Optimist* and "Love and Like," lack depth, richness, and an involvement in the tragic sense. Perhaps his short story, "Death in Miami Beach," which appeared in a recent issue of *The Noble Savage*, indicates a return to the heightened description he used in his first novel when portraying the struggle between the power of life in his hero and the force of death in Grack, the sideshow barker. In *The Catcher in the Rye* J. D. Salinger, too, was able to transcend the limits of subjective experience. But in his recent stories about members of the Glass family, in which he attempts to focus on the intensity of their relationship with one another, Salinger has removed these people from the world—a world with which Holden Caulfield had to, but could not, cope—into a rarified atmosphere that is precious and artificial.

Salinger brings us back to West, at least those heroes of West who cannot make their way in a world of sickness and frustration. Unfortunately they have no family shelter like the Glass house into which to crawl. Perhaps for this reason they see more clearly the true dilemma of modern man. West's four novels are steps in an emergence from art and self into an involvement in American life. His use of symbolic dreams is the means of dealing with the comic-horror behind the facade of superficialities by which most Americans are judged by themselves and others. The matter and method of West's series of dreams within the nightmare are distinctly related to some of the best fiction of the post-war period, such as Bellow's *The Victim*, Ellison's *Invisible Man* and James Purdy's *Color of Darkness*. The fusion of fantasy and reality in these novels and stories comes closest to Poe's idea of "originality" in effect. At the same time these writers extend themselves beyond sensation into the nightmarish events of contemporary society. The description of the Harlem riots at the end of Ellison's book is comparable to the orgiastic madness of the crusading Hollywood mob at the end of *The Day of the Locust*. Both writers turn reality into dream by exaggeration of small incidents of terror and disgust. Ellison's novel moves through a series of fantastic scenes linked by the hero's increasing despair in his lack of identity. The scenes in the paint factory and the succeeding events in the hospital where the hero is "tested" for his responses as a Negro (an electric charge is sent through him and one of the doctor says, "They really *do* have rhythm") are masterpieces of the comic-horror reality beyond reality at which these writers excel. It is not an accident

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that Ellison's hero cites Poe as his favorite author. Entrapment, deception, madness, and worst of all, invisibility or the loss of identity, plague Ellison's hero until he goes underground to avoid the crowd.

In Bellow's *The Victim* the claustrophobic atmosphere of the city, the almost preternatural appearance and action of Allbee and the terrible uncertainty of Asa Leventhal work their effects in a way which remind one of nothing so much as the circumstances under which Miss Lonelyhearts is tortured by a sense of responsibility; the world malaise, frustration and helplessness are similar.

Even more striking are the parallels which can be drawn between West's novels and the work of James Purdy. The same stark economy of style, the same corrupt world, and the same alienated heroes are present in both West and Purdy. In Purdy's *Malcolm*, the innocent is corrupted by the world. In "63 Dream Palace," Claire is destroyed by his corrupted brother; lying dead like a sacrificial animal, he is an image which might be part of the symbology of West. Purdy's world, like West's, is one of almost total despair. He views human cruelties with a dispassionate eye; all is bare, essential to the conversation or the action of the characters. There are no surroundings, no city to divert the eye or ear. His stories take place on the tundra that is modern society, where there is no communication of passion. Both West and Purdy startle the reader with the unmasking of horror and violence (West considered violence as essential in portraying the American scene, in which brutality was an everyday occurrence); but both have a core of compassion which lies behind their hallucinatory view of reality. The surreal method reveals the trauma, opens out the festering wound in men, while the symbolism of the dream extends itself beyond the lives of the characters into the world of the reader. The corruption in *Malcolm* and the collapse of the American Dream in West's work are recognizable to the observer of contemporary life. It is the use of these fantastic effects by these writers that enlarges their work beyond that of the unimaginative "realists" who see life as "it really is." But none of these imaginative writers is concerned with effect alone. Their consciousness is not of self but of self in the world. There is a significance to the lives of their heroes which goes beyond calling up the nostalgic world of the past; it is significant because it is immediate, because it has meaning for the present lives of Americans. "Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?" says Ellison's hero in *The Invisible Man*. Perhaps an important part of the contribution of writers like West is their fantastic vision of society, their use of dream and symbol. But this in itself is not enough. Their heroes are all marginal men living on the edge of society, and they see and feel more for it. Whatever the sources of their vitality may be individually, they all have the double strength of imaginative vision and compassion. In them lies the real promise of American fiction.

HAWTHORNE BY DAYLIGHT

Raymond D. Gozzi

IN *Nathaniel Hawthorne: Man and Writer*,* not an ordinary biography but a "psychograph"—a biographical study organized thematically rather than chronologically and aiming at clarifying character, personality, and important attitudes—Edward Wagenknecht succeeds in packing as much information into its 201 pages as is desirable in a book of its size.

In its partly compendium-like function, it gathers a large share of the pertinent ideas on Hawthorne and organizes them under six chapter headings. The first three are "A Man of Old Salem," (a summary of Hawthorne's life is followed mainly by comment from many sources on his appearance, health, temperament, finances), "Learning and Genius" (his schooling, reading, interests in the sciences and arts, and life and techniques as an author), and "Nature and Humanity" (on his attitudes toward nature and people). The last three headings deal with his political ideas and actions ("The Citizen"), his response to women ("The Fire in the Members"), and his religious ideas and death ("God's Child"). Many related ideas, not included above, are tucked into each of the chapters.

The basically "strictly business" approach of the author in marshaling his material is alleviated, perhaps a bit too infrequently, by good commonsense interpretation and flashes of wit that put the reader in pleasant rapport with the writer. On the whole, this book represents a substantial achievement. In its unsentimental, incisive manner and forthright interpretations, it unquestionably succeeds in bringing considerable light to a wide expanse of old and new data on Hawthorne as human being and artist.

To this reviewer, however, the volume suffers from one central limitation. At its close, the author says of Hawthorne: "There was a dark side to him but he faced the light. If there was a potential Ethan Brand in him or a Young Goodman Brown, he watched him and guarded against him and strangled him."

These are dramatic words, with implications of danger, tension, and violence in the darker areas of Hawthorne's consciousness. The reader coming upon these words after his journey through the largely daylight areas covered by the book is rather startled because he is not really prepared for them.

Yet it would appear that Mr. Wagenknecht, summarizing in a dozen sentences what is most significant about Hawthorne as man and writer, felt that words like these are appropriate. And they are appropriate. Because they are, perhaps the main fault with this volume is that the reader is largely unprepared for them. Wagenknecht has provided little elaboration of the kind of material that supports and justifies his concluding remarks. On the whole, his book is Hawthorne by daylight. But Hawthorne is also a figure groping about in Gothic nights of the soul.

* New York: Oxford University Press, 1961. \$5.50.

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Herman Melville wrote in "Hawthorne and His Mosses," "For spite of all the Indian summer sunlight on the hither side of Hawthorne's soul, the other side—like the dark half of the physical sphere—is shrouded in a blackness, ten times black." Horatio Bridge, one of Hawthorne's closest friends, once thought Hawthorne might commit suicide; to many contemporaries, as well as to a long line of literary critics, he was a man of "twilight"; any reader knows of his preoccupation as a writer with symbols and themes of isolation, defeat, evil, guilt, sorrow, and death. Wagenknecht alludes to such matter, but after stating that Hawthorne found his refuges "against despair" he quickly puts the subject aside and leaves it there. Surely a more determined effort should have been made to link the man and the work.

Wagenknecht's tendency to separate the man from at least the darker parts of his spirit as seen in his work is generally implicit but at times it is also explicit. We note it in the above quotation—"If there was a potential Ethan Brand in him. . . ." We see it when he says that Hawthorne himself "never admitted that he had tried to work out personal problems in a tale. 'When people think I am pouring myself out . . . I am merely telling what is common to human nature.'" Is not Hawthorne here asserting, though in a defensive way that shifts attention from himself, "I am speaking not of myself alone but of all people"?

Wagenknecht brings this up in connection with a long discussion of Hawthorne and isolation, part of which reads:

All this shows Hawthorne's understanding of the dangers of living apart but of course it does not prove that he was in no danger of incurring such dangers. A man does not take out an insurance policy against going crazy simply by entering on a psychiatric practice. And theoretically it is quite possible that Hawthorne warned us so sternly of the dangers of isolation because he knew them in his own experience.

Isn't Mr. Wagenknecht going too far in separating the man and the work with his "theoretically it is quite possible. . . ."? While he goes on to say that we must review other evidence on Hawthorne as a social being before deciding whether or not his experience of isolation influenced his writing, and that conflicts in this evidence are resolvable, he does not satisfactorily settle the matter when he concludes that Hawthorne was not shy "by any proper definition of that term. . . . Insofar as Hawthorne was solitary, it was not because he shrank from contacts with human beings or could not manage them but because he preferred to be alone. This is not shyness; it is an extreme fastidiousness and sensitiveness. In his human relations Hawthorne was not a gourmand but an epicure."

Granting that Hawthorne's epicureanism rather than his shyness in human relations may account for his being both a solitary and not a solitary does not justify Wagenknecht's reluctance fully to accept Hawthorne as speaking from his own experience when telling of the evil fruits of isolation. Whether by choice or not, Hawthorne did know isolation and did most feelingly write of its destructive force.

Hawthorne by Daylight

Mr. Wagenknecht's reluctance to see the man in the writer may stem from a belief that not to dig in his heels here would be to lose the field to those who find all kinds of dark biographical and psychological implications in the stories. The stories stem, he appears to assert, from Hawthorne as "an idealist and a dreamer," and not, as I would contend, partly at least from his morbid insights, fears, aggressions, wishes. And even when Hawthorne himself says that he was a solitary and thereby lost both his hold on reality and the security of being part of humankind, Wagenknecht's position is that he was less solitary than he says—he was solitary by choice, and he was not really solitary after his marriage.

In all this, Wagenknecht seems to me to exhibit an inadequate knowledge of the psychology of writers, a lack that is of little importance in most literary criticism but of more importance in a book aiming at Hawthorne as man and writer. What we are shown of the man *in* the writer is largely confined to objective facts and surface-level interpretation; few deeper psychological connections between the man and writer appear.

If, instead of the passage previously quoted, Wagenknecht could have fittingly asserted at the end of his book, "There was a potential Ethan Brand in him, or a Young Goodman Brown, but he watched him and guarded against him and strangled him—not, however, before he had made him disgorge his story with that power and immediacy of feeling that helps constitute high literary achievement," he would have produced what I would feel to be a more fully satisfactory study.

To Wagenknecht, psychological explanations that dip into non-rational areas are of dubious value.

[Hawthorne] is admired because he used symbols and produced fiction which can be read upon multiple levels, because he was given to literary ambivalences which suggest the kind of hidden depths into which a psychologically oriented age likes to probe. Are these the significant things about him, or is there something more? And are we, perhaps, in some danger of making him over into our own image?

Wagenknecht prefers and uses a psychology focusing on rational, conscious causes, and when such causes are not apparent he is generally content with the meaning conveyed by "experience," "temperament," "genius," or the ways of Providence. Occasionally he will make an analysis that may be said to be oriented in the direction of depth psychology. Possibly the most notable of these is his explanation of "an element of casuistry and self-deception" evident in Hawthorne's angry response when he lost the Salem Custom House job. Wagenknecht's explanation—to me, a valid one—suggests Hawthorne made a rationalizing use of a distinction between his public, working-in-the-world self and his "*real*" self:

... the *real* Hawthorne really did feel the aloofness he professed, for the real Hawthorne had never been in the custom house at all. He had accepted political appointment for financial necessity but had never

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meant any of this. He was a star astray within the bright moon's nether tip. Inner space is always more important than outer space to a man like Hawthorne. . . .

For specifically psychoanalytic explanations Mr. Wagenknecht reserves some harsh words. He calls them too general, mechanical, fanciful, and melodramatic. Referring to Hyatt H. Waggoner's *Hawthorne: A Critical Study* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), a book that mentions the possibility that Hawthorne suffered from an unresolved Oedipus complex and "lifelong restlessness, unease, and sense of guilt or estrangement," Wagenknecht says he admires the courage exhibited "in grappling with a very difficult problem" more than the findings. Courage is one of the merits of Waggoner's notable book, and to this reviewer the subtlety of the findings is another. Few or none of these findings, by the way, depend on a dogmatic adherence to any psychoanalytic pattern; resting on a general awareness of how the below-the-surface mind works, they time and again suggestively integrate man and his work.

THE VOICES OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Douglas Bush

THIS BOOK* is not what the jacket calls it, the "first critical commentary to deal fully" with Arnold's poetry, but probably many readers are daunted by the size of Louis Bonnerot's valuable work (not to mention less ample studies), and Professor Johnson's is valuable and small (146 pages). Indeed it seems to me about as good an introduction and companion to the poetry as a serious reader can find. The author's primary aim "is to examine the virtues of his poetry, with all its moral earnestness, its ambiguity in point of view and tone, its combining of self-consciousness and objective forms." Thus he is concerned no less with expression than with thought and feeling.

A preliminary chapter sketches the Romantic inheritance and the Victorian conditioning in which Arnold had his special share. The body of the book has four chapters. Mr. Johnson takes his title and cue partly from T. S. Eliot's *The Three Voices of Poetry*. "The Voice Oracular" deals with poems in which Arnold is addressing an audience (sonnets, *A Summer Night*, *The Future*, *The Buried Life*, *Obermann Once More*, and other pieces). "Soliloquy" takes up *The New Sirens*, *To a Gipsy Child*, *To Marguerite*, the Oxford poems, *Rugby Chapel*, the *Grande Chartreuse*, *Obermann*. "Monologue and Dialogue" includes *Resignation*, *Mycerinus*, *The Forsaken Merman*, *Dover Beach*, *Tristram and Iseult*, *The Strayed Reveller*, *Merope*, and *Empedocles*. The subjects of "The Voice of the Narrator" are obvious. These major titles have been listed by way of indicating that the classification is not altogether satis-

* W. Stacy Johnson, *The Voices of Matthew Arnold: An Essay in Criticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961). \$4.50.

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factory (as the author is at least partly aware), since some poems could just as well be in another group than the one they are in. One feels this difficulty at the end, where Mr. Johnson speaks (p. 140) of "the danger of his oracles" being unconvincing and his soliloquies too indecisive," and seems to plump for "Monologue and Dialogue." But surely some of the "oracles" and "soliloquies" are as notable examples of "the inner dialogue" of Arnold's mind as some of the uneven third group, and the great *Empedocles* is hardly decisive. Then too, while Arnoldian chronology is often baffling, there is a discernible evolution, which these categories tend to blur. Yet if the scheme appears to be something of a factitious encumbrance, it does little damage to the analysis of individual poems and sometimes leads to suggestive comparisons.

Mr. Johnson is sympathetic, perceptive and candid in regard to Arnold's faults as well as his virtues, and economical. What he has to say has been thoughtfully distilled, and one often wishes—as one rarely does in reading modern criticism—that he had said a little more. (In one place a little less would have been desirable—the remark that "Milton's Apollo and St. Paul, in 'Lycidas,' are given only passages of morality" is odd in more than one way.) Throughout the author sticks closely to the poems as poems and takes external things for granted. And he writes with clarity and without jargon. His reading of Arnold is orthodox—quite rightly so—but he has abundant comments that are concrete and fresh. For instance, anyone who, like Mr. Eliot, thinks of *The Forsaken Merman* and *Tristram and Isolt* as charades, or who, like many of us, is inclined not to think at all of *Balder Dead*, may be persuaded to re-examine his opinions. What is more important, in discussing the most central and familiar poems the critic does much to quicken our insight.

Mr. Johnson sees the "uncritical Tennyson" as "a much less intelligent man and a greater poet than Arnold" (p. 39), and in his conclusion remarks that "Tennyson has visions, too, but they seem to be impressive only when they are freed from the control of strong ideas, when they are divorced from and even opposed to the poet's thinking" (p. 140). Both observations are orthodox enough, but the second seems to me unfair to Tennyson and dubious in its general implications. What are "strong ideas"? Arnold himself said that "For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair" was a moral idea. However, this is an incidental point. In his last paragraph Mr. Johnson sums up Arnold's "living" claims upon us:

His dialogue between poet and critic results in momentary steadiness as well as wholeness, in the control of tone without which poems are not consistent and whole, when Arnold retains but submerges his conflicting (or at least contrasting) ideas and impulses about such matters in the forms of fiction, drama, and imagery: when his voice is that not of the poet critic but of the profoundly and subtly critical poet. It is then that he reconciles the several voices, the several minds, with which most intelligent Victorians, and fragmented modern men as well, must speak.

His book is an intelligent application of these criteria.

Notes on Contributors

(continued from page 6)

James Hayford, represented in *New Poems by American Poets*—2, is music supervisor of the Orleans, Vermont Central School District.

Edwin Honig, who teaches English at Brown University, has published a book of verse, *The Gazabos*, as well as works on Calderón. Constance Hunting writes criticism as well as verse; originally from New England, she now lives in Indiana. Robert B. Johnson will have three poems from his forthcoming volume, *Concentricities*, in *Le Mercure de France*. George Keithley is completing his second novel; he teaches at the University of Iowa.

Halldór Kiljan Laxness won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1955. A. Hyatt Mayor is Curator of Prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Leonard E. Nathan won the Phelan Award for narrative verse in 1958 and a Longview Foundation poetry award for 1960. Wayne O'Neil, last year a Fulbright scholar in Iceland, teaches at the University of Oregon. Kenneth Pitchford is the author of *The Blizzard Aps*, a book of poems. Henry Popkin, Associate Professor of English at New York University, will have an article on Roger Planchon in *Show* magazine. Marc Ratner, of the University of Massachusetts, has appeared in *American Literature*, *Scandinavian Studies* and elsewhere. Raymond Roseliep teaches at Loras College and is the author of *The Linen Bands* (The Newman Press, 1961). Chard Powers Smith, poet and author of *Yankees and God*, lives in Vermont.

Welton Smith is a young San Fran-

ciscan. Fred Stern works in advertising in New York. Dolores Stewart has two children and hopes to start college next fall. Hugh Stretton is an Australian who taught for a year in an American college. Joan Swift has studied in the Poetry Workshop at the University of Washington. Phyllis Webb received a Canadian Government Overseas Award in 1957; her latest book of poems, *Even Your Right Eye*, was published by McClelland and Stewart in 1956.

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(Signed) IRENE M. GOZZI
Business Manager

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 21st day of September 1961.

(Seal) Judson C. Ferguson, Notary Public
My commission expires August 28, 1966.

